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A SOLUTION TO MOLDOVA'S TRANSDNIESTRIAN CONFLICT: REGIONAL COMPLEX INTERDEPENDENCE

by

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June 2003

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13.   ABSTRACT *(maximum 200 words)*

Today, political scientists working with international organizations seek to resolve internal conflicts in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, and Kashmir. To solve such crises, political scientists have mostly tried to apply domestic comparative politics approaches. These techniques emphasize agreements among internal actors and have not been successful in most cases. In the case of the Transdniestrian conflict in the Republic of Moldova, mediators have found it difficult to achieve internal agreement because external factors also have played a significant role during the conflict. Therefore, even if an internal agreement is achieved, it will remain fragile due to the vulnerable geographic location of the Republic of Moldova and to the limited state capacity to counter influential external actors. For the purpose of solving the Transdniestrian conflict in the long run, this thesis analyzes the possibilities of creating regional complex interdependence around the Republic of Moldova, which would strengthen an internal agreement to resolve the conflict. Regional complex interdependence inter-connects the countries interested in the region around the Republic of Moldova: Romania, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine. This solution presumes external and internal interconnections based on the complex interdependence theory of neo-liberalism. The main potential drawback is that any asymmetrical dependencies in the initial stage of cooperation will imbalance the proposed complex interdependence causing unilateral dependence (most likely on Russia) leading other actors to take countermeasures.

In fact, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe as a neutral party has been being a legal umbrella for mediation since all parties consider it an appropriate organization for the negotiations. Nevertheless, creating such an arrangement requires an initial role of the United States of America and the European Union to balance Russian influence until the region becomes *interdependent*. At that moment, the continuation of the Transdniestrian conflict will become irrelevant because the pre-conditions for conflict will be eliminated.

14. SUBJECT TERMS Bessarabia, Moldova, Moldavia, Post-Soviet, Transdniestria, Dniestr, Soviet Union, Russia, Romania, Ukraine, OSCE, GUUAM, CIS, International Relations Theory, Realism, Neo-liberalism, Constructivism, Complex Interdependency Theory.			**15. NUMBER OF PAGES** 103
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REGIONAL COMPLEX INTERDEPENDENCE**

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iii

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ABSTRACT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

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LIST OF TABLES

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I.   INTRODUCTION

This thesis analyzes the possibility of creating regional complex interdependence around the Republic of Moldova to solve the Transdniestrian conflict in the long run. This conflict erupted after the collapse of the Soviet Union and still has the potential to be reignited due to unsolved internal and external disputes. In the case of the Republic of Moldova, due to its vulnerable geographic location, even if an internal agreement concerning the conflict is achieved, the peace settlement will remain fragile because the causes of the conflict, even though appearing to be internal, is also strongly supported by external factors. Therefore, to strengthen the internal peace settlement, this thesis proposes developing regional complex interdependence among the set of states historically interested in the region around the Republic of Moldova. Creating complex interdependence, as emphasized in the neo-liberalism paradigm of international relations theory, will eliminate the possibility that the conditions for Transdniestrian conflict will reappear cyclically. Such an approach and solution would also be a contribution to the entire configuration of the European security system.

Figure 1.   The Republic of Moldova

A.   BACKGROUND

Many experts on internal conflict, such as Stuart J. Kaufman, describe conflicts on the post-Soviet Union territory, including the Transdniestrian conflict in the Republic of Moldova, as ethnic wars manipulated by elites. Kaufman argues that three factors are necessary for such a conflict to result: hostile masses, belligerent leaders, and inter-ethnic security dilemmas. All of these factors were indeed reflected in the Transdniestrian conflict in 1992, amplified by the foreign patron, the Soviet Union (later Russia).[1] In contrast, Michael E. Brown emphasizes structural factors of the intra-state conflict. He argues that internal state conflicts have structural, political, economic, and cultural causes.[2] These scholars mostly view the intra-state conflicts' causes through normative and domestic-level analysis, largely underestimating empirical and external factors. In fact, Matthew Evangelista concluded the Soviet Union collapse revealed other important factors. Indeed,

> more than seven decades of Soviet rule have left a legacy of ethnic division, economic disparity, and political uncertainty that creates powerful pre-conditions for internal conflict … [however] efforts to resolve conflicts anywhere in the former Soviet Union must give due weight to Russia's power and interests. That does not mean allowing the region to become a Russian sphere of influence. It does mean that strategies for influencing developments in the region must take into account Russia's involvement and try to shift Russian policy in benign directions.[3]

This thesis does not reject the claims of the above-mentioned analysts. The empirical analysis of the development of the Republic of Moldova as a nation-state, however, demonstrates another pattern in the Transdniestrian conflict, where the aforementioned claims were only the pre-conditions. The fact that the Baltic Republics, despite having the same nationalistic development pattern and the same percentage of the Russian-speaking population, did not produce similar conflict proved that the Transdniestrian

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[1] Stuart J. Kaufman, "Spiraling to Ethnic War: Elites, Masses, and Moscow in Moldova's Civil War," *International Security,* volume 21, issue 2 (Autumn, 1996).

[2] Michael Brown, "The Causes of Internal Conflict," in *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict,* ed. Michael Brown et al. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2001), 3-25.

[3] Matthew Evangelista, "Historical Legacies and the Politics of Intervention in the Former Soviet Union," in *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*, ed. Michael E. Brown (Center for Science and International Affairs John F. Kennedy School of Government Harvard University, 1996), 108.

conflict is not only internal. First, compare to the Republic of Moldova, Baltic States did not have controversial regions such as Transdniestria, which was historically used for psychological attacks and influences in Moldova (Bessarabia) from 1924 to the demise of the Soviet Union. Second, the conflict resolution has demonstrated that the 1992 conflict in Moldova is also about the historical collision of several states' interests in that region; one of them is Russia, an asymmetrically powerful actor, which cannot be influenced as Serbia was during the 1995 Dayton agreement regarding the Bosnia and Herzegovina conflict. Thus, conflicts such as the Transdniestrian one consist of a collision of external influences in the region. Therefore, conflict resolution also will depend on the relations among the influential external actors in the region.

The Republic of Moldova,[4] one of the smallest states of the former Soviet Union with a population of approximately 4.5 million people, is located in the Southeastern part of Europe between Romania in the West and Ukraine in the East. The capital is Chisinau. Also, it was known as the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) created in 1940 as a consequence of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of 1939.[5] It consisted of Bessarabia (the eastern part of the historical Moldova principality) and a part of the former Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR – future Transdniestria), artificially created by the Soviet Union in 1924 to facilitate the penetration of Soviet propaganda into the Kingdom of Romania and territorial expansion into Romania (for Bessarabia).[6] When the Republic of Moldova in 1991 declared its independence from the Soviet Union, the Russian-speaking population of the former MASSR territory, on the left bank of the Dniestr River, seceded by de facto forming the Dniestr Moldovan Republic. The secessionists justified their policy under the pretext of protecting Russians and Ukrainians against anticipated discrimination by the Moldovan government and fear of reunification with Romania. From 1991 to 1992, armed clashes erupted resulting in 1,000 deaths and 150,000 displaced citizens.[7] The Transdniestrian self-organized forces

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[4] Former Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic of the USSR.

[5] Anthony Read and David Fisher, *The Deadly Embrace: Hitler, Stalin and the Nazi-Soviet Pact 1939-1941* (New York/ London: Norton & Company), 471-473.

[6] Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford: Hoover Institutions Press, 2000), 63.

[7] See Appendix in Ted Robert Gurr and Barbara Harff eds., *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics* (Westview Press, 1994), 160.

were decisively backed by the Russian (formerly Soviet) 14th Army, based in Transdniestria. In fact, despite the cease-fire agreement and continuing negotiations, the conflict is not politically solved yet.

Many Russian politicians perceive the Transdniestrian conflict in the Republic of Moldova as an internal ethnic struggle between "nationalists in Chisinau bent on union with Romania and ethnic Russians in Transdniestria fearful of being swept up in an enlarged Romania state [thus searching for independence]."[8] Even some Western international relations specialists agree with that point. For instance, Stuart J. Kaufman in his article "Spiraling to Ethnic War" admits that "the conflict between the former Soviet Republic of Moldova and its separatists on the left bank of the Dniestr river is largely an ethnic conflict."[9] However, Kaufman also indicates that it was organized as a civil war, in which the ethnic component played an important role. In reality, the Russian and Ukrainian ethnic component was used mainly as a mobilization factor, mostly only in Transdniestria, to achieve a political objective, independence. The striking facts of the conflict are that Moldovans and Romanians compose 40 percent of the Transdniestria and the majority of the Russian and Ukrainian population live throughout the Republic of Moldova's entire territory and do not support the Transdniestrian secession.[10] Furthermore, the Soviet ideology deeply impacted the new Moldovan identity and people; therefore, Moldovans truly started believing that Transdniestria was part of their land – a new political state – the Republic of Moldova. That fact neither Romanian nor Transdniestrian nor Russian politicians can understand even nowadays. Thus, the conflict seems more as a civil war for separatism, in which external actors played a crucial role in supporting the Transdniestrian objectives.

Historically, that part of the region (former Bessarabia) has suffered from geo-strategic influences. Until 1812, Moldova (including Bessarabia) was dominated by the Ottoman Empire. Then, in 1812 Bessarabia was annexed from Moldova to the Russian

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[8] Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford: Hoover Institutions Press, 2000), 179.

[9] Stuart J. Kaufman, "Spiraling to Ethnic War: Elites, Masses, and Moscow in Moldova's Civil War," *International Security,* volume 21, issue 2 (Autumn, 1996), 119.

[10] Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford: Hoover Institutions Press, 2000), 185. See also Table nr. 1 in Chapter II.

Empire. Subsequently, in 1917 the region's authority took advantage of the Russian revolution accompanied by civil war and reunited with Romania. However, the recovered Soviet state managed to gain control of Bessarabia through the 1939 Ribbentrop - Molotov Pact.[11] Eventually, in 1941 the Romanian troops in alliance with Nazi Germany exercised the power over that region. Finally, after the Second World War, the Soviet Union had an indisputable monopoly over the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (Bessarabia) until 1991.

Thus, Russia (Soviet Union) and Romania (previously the Ottoman Empire) exercised extensive influence over that region. As a result, those processes created a xenophobic atmosphere in Transdniestria and in some parts of the Republic of Moldova. The historical memory also produced a polarization in society, which could have led to the state's partition. Therefore, the main causes of the conflict also lay in long-standing external influence over that region and not only in internal ethnic disputes.

In fact, the Republic of Moldova after becoming independent proclaimed a policy of permanent neutrality in 1991, which excludes, as a matter of principle, participation in any military alliances or organizations as well as foreign troops being on Moldovan territory.[12] However, in 1992 military conflict in the eastern part of the Republic of Moldova created a dilemma for the government: to start integration into European structures (similar to the foreign policies of Hungary, Romania, Slovenia, and Bulgaria) or to integrate into the Commonwealth of Independent States, dominated by the Russian Federation.[13] Strategically, the former one implies losing the Transdniestrian region while the latter one means *overcoming* the internal conflict by moving into the Russian political orbit. Neither of these options seems acceptable, despite the fact that the Republic of Moldova has been trying to promote a foreign policy of permanent neutrality. Such a policy stopped the 1992 military actions but has not solved the political element of the conflict. Furthermore, the conflict only reduces foreign investment and, in the

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[11] A Pact dividing influence in Eastern and Central Europe between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, presumed the partition of Poland and the annexation of the Baltic States, Bessarabia, part of Finland to the Soviet Union.

[12] It is stipulated in Art.11 of the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova adopted in 1994, with amendments of July 5, 2000.

[13] CIS – Commonwealth Independent States organization established after the collapse of the Soviet Union and includes 12 Former Soviet Union Republics.

context of globalization, leads toward a deeper economic crisis. Therefore, the current situation deepens the secessionist mood in Transdniestria and affects the Republic of Moldova's development as a newly independent state.

Resolving the Transdniestrian conflict is important for several reasons. First, its reignition can harm the civilian population. Second, it can affect not only neighboring states but also Russia and other states by creating an influx of refugees. Third, it can destabilize the regional security. In fact, the reignition of the conflict can potentially destabilize the security in the region due to several reasons:

- There is 40,000 tons of stocks and munitions, belonging to the Russian Federation, that are difficult to withdraw and which must be neutralized in that zone; the destabilization of the region can lead to illegal capturing and smuggling of those stocks; consequently, that may spark widespread organized crime;[14]

- There are no existing guarantees from any states or international organizations for the security of the Republic of Moldova, in spite of the declared permanent neutrality policy.

The latter point is a serious concern for the Transdniestrian authorities who view their future under the traditional protection of *Great Russia* or *Slavic Brotherhood* in contrast to the remaining part of the Republic of Moldova, which has been affected by the memory of the 1939 Hitler-Stalin Pact. Thus, the conflict resolution also will depend on external influences and not only on internal agreement. Even if an internal agreement is signed, it will be vulnerable due to the isolated geographic location and weak state capacity of the Republic of Moldova to resist economic or political pressure from neighboring states and Russia.

To solve the Transdniestrian conflict in the Republic of Moldova, this thesis analyzes the possibility of creating regional complex interdependence around the Republic of Moldova. That resolution basically interconnects the countries interested in this geo-political region: Romania, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine. This proposal is

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[14] Project "Military Aspects of Conflict Solution in the East Zone of the Republic of Moldova," *Publications,* Institute for Public Science (Republic of Moldova) <http://www.ipp.md/publications> (11 August 2002). (Romanian) (Translation by author.)

based on the complex interdependence theory of the international relations' neo-liberalism paradigm. This theory presumes external-internal interactions by involving actors other than governments in multiple channels of cooperation. In fact, complex interdependence is characterized by multiple channels of connections between countries, multiple issues on interstate agendas, and the low likelihood of use of military force toward other governments.[15] Complex interdependence also draws the new distinction in world policy between dependence and interdependence. The former traditionally implied a state of being determined or significantly affected by external forces, while the latter implies situations characterized by reciprocal effects among countries having joint gains and losses, by having domestic and foreign policy closely linked, and by recognition that each state's security is interconnected with that of the others.[16] Consequently, the proposed resolution also would be an input in the entire configuration of the European security.

Historically, states have made several attempts to build a cooperative international/regional collective security system: the European Concert, the League of Nations, the United Nations (UN), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Regrettably, none of the present-day security organizations could have intervened in the many regional conflicts that arose after the Soviet Union crumbled. That was seen in the Republic of Moldova in 1992 as well. In contrast, the West-European cooperative system, which is a combination of interdependent political, economical and military tools, has established capabilities to manage its security issues adequately. That system demonstrates the working of complex interdependence theory in Western Europe. Meanwhile, it is far from the Republic of Moldova's Eastern conflict region.

History demonstrates how interested states indirectly as well as directly support "allied" sides in international conflicts: Turkey and Greece in Cyprus, India and Pakistan in Kashmir, and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Russia in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In fact, several international relations schools have been trying to explain various security dilemmas, including conflicts such as in the Republic of Moldova.

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[15] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Harvard: Little, Brown and Company, 1977), 25.

[16] Ibid, 8-11.

Specifically, realism (the traditional approach), presuming the centrality of power and interest, views international relations as a continuing struggle of the nation states, the main actors of the anarchical international system. According to the realist paradigm, "the integration of nations is often talked about, but … seldom takes place."[17] The realists state that such situations occur because of the limits of cooperation in an a*narchical system* in which states worry about the balance of power. Therefore, the modern world structure presumes the domination of dependence over interdependence. However, the smaller "states [such as the Republic of Moldova] do not willingly place themselves in the situation of increased dependency."[18] If the internal Moldovan conflict is solved on Transdniestrian conditions, the new situation will make the Republic of Moldova completely dependent on the Russian Federation. In such a scenario, the other interested states, Ukraine and Romania, will "seek to control what they depend on or to lessen the extent of their dependency."[19] Thus, applying the balance of power theory to solve the Transdniestrian conflict will eventually bring the Republic of Moldova under the major control of the Russian Federation; consequently, the other interested actors will assume the opposite role, which may destabilize the region. As a result, neither the security of the Republic of Moldova nor the Transdniestrian conflict will be solved.

In contrast, liberalism implies the growing role of non-state actors, such as international organizations and non-governmental structures; and constructivism emphasizes the socially constructed nature of security relations and states that events can be changed through social engineering that alters how people think and act. The solution for the Transdniestrian conflict proposed here would be to apply the neo-liberalist and constructivist approaches in the form of regional complex interdependence, which can guarantee security protection even to small states like Moldova (similar to the case of Luxembourg). That approach presumes the need to develop a long-standing solution, which will involve new actors and create a complex interstate interdependence among the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, and Ukraine. For example, the proposed regional complex interdependence presumes steps such as creating a regional

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[17] Kenneth N. Waltz, "Anarchic Orders and Balance of Power," in *Neo-realism and Its Critics,* ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 101.

[18] Ibid, 104.

[19] Ibid, 103.

quadripartite economical free trade zone, interconnected transgovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and quadripartite military cooperation in humanitarian, anti-terrorist, and stability operations (including common military exercises). States will be interested in such cooperation since it can connect Russian with South-Eastern European markets and enhance all aspects of security. Furthermore, the benefits of these engagements will be mutual. The new interdependence will eventually create new norms and principles of the regional regime. Because "changes in principles and norms are changes of the regime [in the region] itself,"[20] the attitude of the main regional actors toward Moldova and conflict will change. Therefore, to continue the conflict will be irrelevant. Thus, the argument of the proposed transformation is that creating complex regional interdependence will strengthen the internal agreement between the central Moldovan and Transdniestrian authorities; create new norms and principles of the complex political, economic and security interdependent regime; and in the long run eliminate the reappearance of the conditions for the Transdniestrian conflict in the future. Furthermore, it will promote stability in Eastern Europe.

B.   ORGANIZATION

Chapter II discusses the development of the Transdniestrian conflict in the Republic of Moldova employing the structural/cultural approach of comparative politics and the traditional (realist) approach of the international relations theory. The main focus is the hidden reasons for the conflict, including the contradictionary empirical facts, different states' interests, and political backlash of the different political cultures in the new independent state – the Republic of Moldova. The conclusion of the chapter suggests the additional need for external approaches. Even if an internal agreement is signed, it will be very vulnerable due to the Republic of Moldova's dependence on its neighbors and Russia.

Chapter III analyzes the conflict resolution process. The chapter shows that mainly the conflict resolution process has reflected the cold war mentality and the traditional realist approach. This chapter demonstrates that even though conflict resolution has been an internal matter, external factors will play a major role in the final

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[20] Stephen D. Krasner, "Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regime as Intervening Variables," in *International Regimes,* ed. Stephen D. Krasner (Cornell University Press, 1983), 4.

result of the political agreement. The internal agreement should be a basis for resolution. However, resolving the conflict would always be fragile because of the opposing views of the external states around the Republic of Moldova. Even if the internal agreement is reached satisfying Transdniestrian leaders, the Republic of Moldova will always be dependent on the commitment to the East in the current regional order. The more Moldova tries to shift foreign policy westward, the more the Transdniestrian problem will be heard again. Thus, the stability in the Republic of Moldova, which has a vulnerable geographical location and a limited state capacity, will depend on cautious Moldovan foreign policy and interactions between Romania, Ukraine, and most importantly the Russian Federation. Therefore, in addition to the internal agreement, an external one should be negotiated for the purpose of strengthening the peace settlement. The external agreement should avoid the past mistakes and interconnect the external players with the support of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the United States of America, and the European Union (EU).

In this context, Chapter IV introduces conventional external approaches. First, it demonstrates the limitations of the realist theory for conflict resolution due to the limits of cooperation of the nation states in the international system. That approach can only polarize the society and lead to state partition in the future. In the meantime, the liberalist and constructivist approaches (international organizations as mediators) have more advantages, but their recent applications have not brought fruitful results in the peace process of the Transdniestrian conflict nor in Cyprus, Kashmir, or Bosnia and Herzegovina. Practically, the chapter asserts that the participation of the Republic of Moldova (neutral country) in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Moldova Cooperative Initiative (GUUAM); North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) "Partnership for Peace" program, and the South-Eastern European Stability Pact alongside with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's efforts are insufficient to resolve the Transdniestrian conflict.[21] That policy does not eliminate the key causes of the conflict: the dispute between the government of Moldova and Transdniestria's leadership and most importantly the

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[21] GUUAM – Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova cooperative initiative around Black Sea. Southeastern European Stability Pact – Pact adopted in 1999 directed mostly to promote peace, trust, and stability in Balkans and Southeastern part of Europe.

external conflicting interests of the states interested in the region around the Republic of Moldova. In contrast, Chapter IV demonstrates the potential applicability of the complex interdependence theory in that geo-political region. Therefore, the conclusion of the chapter is based on the argument that developing the complex interdependence between the Republic of Moldova and the interested neighboring states will solve the Transdniestrian conflict in the long run. The interdependence can establish strong links at all interstate levels and potentially change the regional regime.

Therefore, regional complex interdependence would be applicable to the Republic of Moldova presuming a deeper connection with Romania, Russia, and Ukraine along with the United States of America and the European Union's support. The main characteristic of the solution is that complex interdependence will involve the interaction of not only state but also non-state actors, including international organizations. That process would eliminate the suspiciousness of the conflicting parties. Furthermore, such a proposal will not require Moldova to abandon its declared neutrality. The new policy can be viewed as cooperative neutrality with military non-alignment in a complex interdependent environment. The argument of the proposed transformation is that new norms and principles of the complex political, economic and security interdependent regime will positively influence the solution of the Transdniestrian conflict in the Republic of Moldova.

The conclusion summarizes why an external - approach formula will be a key to the Transdniestrian conflict, eliminating tensions in that region. In fact, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe as a neutral party have been being a legal umbrella for mediation since all parties consider it as the most appropriate organization for negotiations. Therefore, recommendations will be provided for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, for the authorities of the Republic of Moldova, guarantor-states of the peace negotiations, and Romania as well. Nevertheless, the significant factor in creating such an arrangement should be the role of the United States of America and the European Union to balance the asymmetrical powerful influence of Russia in that region. The US and the EU influence will ensure that all countries interested in the Republic of Moldova will achieve equal political and economic representations in the proposed complex interdependence. Correspondingly, when the

norms and principles of the regional political, economic and security regime eventually become complexly interdependent, continuing the Transdniestrian conflict will become irrelevant.

II. ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRANSDNIESTRIAN CONFLICT

The annexation of Bessarabia was a great advantage to us [Russia]. It brought us closer to the Balkans, gave us the power to consolidate a foothold on the Danube and to prepare ourselves for a later advance at the expenses of the Turkish Empire, thus carrying out the policy of Catherine II.

− Russian Ministry of Education (after 1812)[22]

Annexation of Bessarabia [from Romania in 1939] by USSR was a crime without any historical or judicial justification. Such practices of the big empires left bitterness in the minds of Romanians.

− Ion Iliescu, President of Romania (July 24, 2002)[23]

In that time [1991-1992], when 'Moldova was ready to re-join Romania', Smirnov [head of Transdniestria] and his team found the courage to resist the policy of Chisinau [capital of the Republic of Moldova].

− Ghenadii Selezniov, Chairman of the State Duma [Parliament]

of the Russian Federation (October 22, 2002)[24]

Generally, the conventional wisdom about modern internal conflicts after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia suggests that they were ignited due to the collapse of a central authority releasing old-forgotten nationalism. However, the ethnic component of the Transdniestrian region (table 1) clearly demonstrates that almost 40 percent of the populations of that region were Moldovans/Romanians. According to Matthew Evangelista, this fact suggests that the conflict is more a case of civil war/separatism than an ethnic clash, while authorities of Transdniestria "dominated by 'Russians filled with Soviet nostalgia'" strived to present it as an ethnic conflict.[25] For instance, the President of the self-declared Transdniestrian

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[22] Nicolas Dima, *Bessarabia and Bukovina* (Eastern European Monographs, Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1982), 13.

[23] Flux, "President of Romania, Ion Iliescu, Declared, in Moscow, That Annexation of Bessarabia by the USSR Was a Historical Crime," *MOLDOVA AZI* <http://www.azi.md/print/20018/Ro> (24 July 2002). (Romanian) (Translation by author.)

[24] "Russian Federation *Oversight* the Sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova," *Reporter-MD (2001)* <http://www.reporter_md.htm> (22 October 2002). (Russian) (Translation by author.)

[25] Matthew Evangelista, "Historical Legacies and the Politics of Intervention in the Former Soviet Union," in *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*, ed. Michael E. Brown (Center for Science and International Affairs John F. Kennedy School of Government Harvard University, 1996), 114.

Moldovan Republic, Igor Nicolaevichi Smirnov, views the conflict even as a Moldovan aggression.[26] That point of view has dominated Transdniestrian political agenda and the mass media since the outbreak of conflict. However, according to Matthew Evangelista:

> there are actually more Russians and Ukrainians living in Moldova proper than in the secessionist region [Transdniestria]. They have not supported the secession; nor, by and large, has the Moldovan government mistreated them. The Dniestr Republic government, by contrast, has violated the rights of ethnic Moldovans in the region … the conflict in Moldova is not strictly or even essentially an interethnic one – indeed, both sides deny that it is.[27]

Table 1. Population of Transdniestria, from 1897 to 1989[28]

	1936		1989	
Moldovans	122,683	41.8 %	239,936	39.9 %
Ukrainians	84,293	28.7	170,079	28.3
Russians	41,794	14.2	153,393	25.5
Jews	23,158	7.9	-	-
Other	21,873	7.4	38,252	6.4
Total	271,928	100.0	601,660	100.0

In this context, to demonstrate the origins and development of the Transdniestrian conflict, the first part of the chapter will empirically examine nation-state formation of the current Republic of Moldova and Transdniestria, which have been in the crossroads of the historical geopolitical struggle of the bigger states around that region. This chapter will demonstrate that the driving causes of the conflict over Moldova were also the Soviet (previously the Russian Empire) drive for influence in the Balkans, and Romania's attempts to win back historical (lost) territories. Both sides strived by different means to accomplish their goals by using rhetoric about Romanian/Moldovan and Russian (Soviet)

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[26] Igor Smirnov, "Their Situation Improving by Taking Advantage of Us Will Not Happened," *Official Site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic, 1*2 <http://www.mfa-pmr.idknet.com/smi/index/php?lang=rus&options=1&id=0&next=1> (29 July 2002). (Russian); also see on this site the "General Information" compartment, where the military conflict of 1992 is defined as a "The result of the policy of genocide, carried out by the Republic of Moldova, was the full-scale military aggression of Moldova against *Pridnestrovie* [Transdniestria in Russian]." (Translation by author.)

[27] Matthew Evangelista, "Historical Legacies and the Politics of Intervention in the Former Soviet Union," in *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*, ed. Michael E. Brown (Center for Science and International Affairs John F. Kennedy School of Government Harvard University, 1996), 113.

[28] Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford: Hoover Institutions Press, 2000), 185.

identities and languages, and artificially created the MASSR (future Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic). Finally, the struggle resulted in the Transdniestrian conflict.

The second part of the chapter demonstrates that the toppling of the Soviet Union was only an intervening spark for the conflict. It demonstrates: a national Moldovan awakening; the Transdniestrian elite's (who were privileged in the Soviet era) antagonism toward the new emerging Moldovan elite; a failed Transdniestrian attempt to repeat the historical path of the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (1924) by creating a Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic; and external factors that significantly supported the military actions and political confrontation. This section argues that by de facto forming the Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic, the external actors achieved their objective of not permitting the unification of Bessarabia with Romania, which was widely perceived as Moldova's goal in Russia and Ukraine. The chapter concludes that unless the triangle of Russia-Romania-Ukraine (the states in territorial proximity) is connected in a complex interdependence, the internal conflict resolution will always be vulnerable.

A.   **HISTORICAL GEO-POLITICAL CONTRADICTIONS AS SOURCES OF THE CONFLICT**

The Republic of Moldova, located in the Southeastern part of Europe between Romania in the West and Ukraine in East, was known historically as Bessarabia and then the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR), which was created in 1940 as a consequence of the 1939 Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact.[29] It is composed of Bessarabia, the eastern part of the historical Moldova principality (formerly in the eastern part of Romania), and a part of the former Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR), which was artificially created by the Soviet Union in 1924 to facilitate the penetration of Soviet propaganda into the Kingdom of Romania and a territorial claim toward Romania (for Bessarabia).[30] Territorial disputes in the search for spheres of

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[29] Anthony Read and David Fisher, *The Deadly Embrace: Hitler, Stalin and the Nazi-Soviet Pact 1939-1941* (New York/ London: Norton & Company), 471-473.

[30] Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford: Hoover Institutions Press, 2000), 63.

influence over historical Moldova and the current Republic of Moldova have continued for centuries: initially by the Ottoman Empire, later on between Russia (including the Soviet Union) and Romania.

The Republic of Moldova (former MSSR) proclaimed independence on August 27, 1991. Unfortunately, developing and consolidating the new state has not been smooth due to historical contradictions in the state and national identity formation, which have constantly been impacted by external factors. Historically, larger states' clashes over the region left a bitter legacy in the population of the Republic of Moldova (including Transdniestria) creating a polarized xenophobic mood. The latter factor became the weapon of the political elites within the Republic of Moldova and Transdniestria to accomplish their political goals, which were the intervening causes in the conflict.[31] This chapter argues that the driving causes of the conflict over Moldova were also the Soviet (previously the Russian Empire) drive for the influence in the Balkans, and Romania's attempts to win back historical territories. Both sides strived by different means to accomplish their goals by using rhetoric about Romanian/Moldovan and Russian (Soviet) identities and languages, and artificially created the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR – future Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic). Finally, the struggle resulted in the Transdniestrian conflict.

1. External Influences in State and Nation Formation (Origins)

> The nation state was the secular organization of the nation's power, declared Max Weber … The people are identical with the nation, which sees itself not just as a cultural, but also a political entity. The nation as constituted by the people finds and evolves its identity within the state; it is in the context of the nation state that a people is free to govern itself, free from alien rule.[32]

The nation formation in the Republic of Moldova (Bessarabia and Transdniestria) was historically impacted by several foreign dominations, most recently Russian, which affected the nation-consciousness, language, religion, and identity. Transdniestria (which had been under the dominance of the Russian Empire even longer) along with certain national policies in Bessarabia (MSSR) have been regularly used as a check - and -

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[31] Stuart J. Kaufman, "Spiraling to Ethnic War: Elites, Masses, and Moscow in Moldova's Civil War," *International Security,* volume 21, issue 2 (Autumn, 1996), 120.

[32] Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism* (Blackwell Publisher, 1996), 197.

balance mechanism against the possible unification of Bessarabia with Romania. Thus, the externally impacted nation formation in the Republic of Moldova proved to be the state's vulnerability, which was used in the Transdniestrian conflict in 1992. That factor can be also used as a continuing external influence in the Republic of Moldova, which has a limited capacity to counter its neighbors and Russia.

Generally, European states have undergone different state and nation formations. However, the main distinction is between political nation states and cultural nation states. As Hagen Schulze, a German Professor, summarized: "In that sense it might well be said that, in France, it was the state that gave birth to the nation."[33] At the same time, he also concluded that "formation of a common British identity was not rooted in the counties alone: cultural integration proceeded hand in hand with political integration of the state."[34] Hence, in France and Britain nations were forged by the state, creating political nation-states. In contrast, emerging ethnic nations, living in three big multinational empires, facilitated state formation in Central-Eastern Europe. Therefore, the national-liberation struggle and cultural nationalism became causes for the cultural-nation state formation, including the unification of Wallachia and historical Moldova, which existed from 1340 until 1866. Having the same origins and cultural similarities (including one language and the dominant Orthodox religion), they joined to form modern Romania in 1866.[35] Nevertheless, until that time, the region had been a focal point of clashes between three empires: Ottoman Turkey, Austria-Hungary, and Russia, which would affect future nation-state formations of many states, including Moldova (Bessarabia) and Romania.

After the long Ottoman domination of Moldova, during the Russo-Turkish War from 1806 to 1812, the Moldovan principality would itself come under direct Russian control, another shifting external impact on the state and nation formation.[36] Ironically, later the control over the Danube and Dniestr Rivers would become a Russian strategic

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[33] Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism* (Blackwell Publisher, 1996), 103.

[34] Ibid, 123.

[35] Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 53.

[36] Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford: Hoover Institutions Press, 2000), 15.

goal, which most of the European countries would worry about during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As a consequence, in 1812, fearing deteriorated Franco-Russian relations, "Russia hurriedly concluded the Bucharest Treaty with Turkey managing to annex the eastern half of the Principality of Moldova (Bessarabia). The Russians argued that Bessarabia was still different from Moldova …."[37] However, the appeal issued by the de jure recognized nation-state of all Romanians, the Kingdom of Romania, in 1878 for the unification of all Romanians, including Bessarabia, forced the Russian Empire to apply stricter control and influence over the population of Bessarabia in order to uphold its strategic ground at the Danube River.[38] As a result, that was perhaps the most radical external impact on the state and nation formations of Bessarabia, the future Republic of Moldova. From then on, the Russian authorities would never consider any possibilities of losing that territory and would apply all means to incorporate that region in the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union. That factor left the population bitter over the future Romania that considered that part of the land their historical territory.

In summary, the initial stage of the Romanian nation-state formation shows that the majority of Romanians (Moldovans and Wallachians) had a common religion, Romanian identity, and language (1825), which culminated in the union of the two principalities from 1859 to 1861. Thereafter, however, the population of Bessarabia went on a historical *detour,* which was affected until 1991 by the struggle between Russia (Soviet Union) and Romania for Bessarabia (MSSR), when Transdniestria was used as a psychological check factor.

a.   *Reunion with Romania in 1918 and the Transdniestrian Factor*

The collapse of the Russian Empire and the First World War's geo-political results radically changed the fate of Bessarabia, resulting in unification with Romania in 1918. However, that unification was not a welcome outcome for Bessarabians but rather the need for a land of limited capabilities to choose the least bad alternative and to shed

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[37] Nicolas Dima, *Bessarabia and Bukovina* (Eastern European Monographs, Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1982), 13.

[38] Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford: Hoover Institutions Press, 2000), 25. First, the distinct Bessarabia's autonomous church was fully subordinated to Moscow. The constitution of Bessarabia (1818) was abandon making the region another Russian province (*guberniia;* 1871). The use of the Moldovan language was abandoned in school and public life and was accompanied by prohibiting Romanian books. Transdniestria began such a process even earlier.

the previous harsh Russian management.[39] This would eventually contribute toward revision of such a situation not only by the great powers but also by the local population because of two reasons: first, for Bessarabia the time spent in the Russian Empire meant it did not have a strong Romanian spirit; second, it became a multi-national land. Furthermore, again the strategic games of the *Realpolitik* between the major powers would be the main causes for Soviet struggle for reannexation of Bessarabia.

According to Nicolas Dima, for Russia, losing Bessarabia was seen as a defeat and a strategic loss. Ironically, a large Moldovan population remained at the other part of the Dniestr River, which would be manipulated later by Moscow to psychologically impact the Romanian authority:

> The Moldavian ASSR [i.e., the future Transdniestria!] [was] created [in 1924] along the boundaries of Romania to induce Moldavians in eastern Romania to agitate for incorporation into the Soviet Union. The same technique was used by Moscow in many other cases, notably the now disbanded Karelo-Finnish republic in the north and the Tadzhik republic in Central Asia [Buriat-Mongol autonomous republic in East]. Referring to the Soviet intentions of the time, an American diplomat wrote in 1924 that: 'It is apparently not the intention of the Bolsheviks to try to recover Bessarabia by force of arms, but rather to keep Romania in a nervous state….'[40]

Finally, the economic depression, growing Romanian national fascism, and most important, the Romanian political mistakes toward the Bessarabian population, the mirror image of the previously Russian policy, would favor the Soviet policy attempts.[41]

b.   The 1939 Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and the Fate of Bessarabia

The Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact as well as the 1918 unification of Bessarabia and Romania became the main tools of the political elites of Moldova and Transdniestria to mobilize the civilian masses. Specifically, the MSSR began boiling

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[39] Nicolas Dima, *Bessarabia and Bukovina* (Eastern European Monographs, Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1982), 16.

[40] Nicolas Dima, *Bessarabia and Bukovina* (Eastern European Monographs, Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1982), 23.

[41] Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford: Hoover Institutions Press, 2000), 42-48. Russian teachers and public workers were purged; Russian and Ukrainian schools and churches were closed; the Russian Julian religious calendar and Cyrillic alphabet of the language abandoned. Additionally, Bessarabian politicians (elite) found life in *Greater* Romania far less welcoming than they expected.

after discovering that the so-called non-aggression Pact between Stalin and Hitler, signed by Ribbentrop and Molotov in Moscow on August 23, 1939, had a secret protocol defining spheres of influence in Central-Eastern Europe, including Bessarabia, without any *plebiscite* – the famous Soviet demand toward Romania regarding Bessarabia.[42]

That fact created an incentive for Romania to became allied with Nazi Germany to take back Bessarabia. Indeed, German strategists, according to Dima, who "advised Romania to yield to Moscow's demands for it would settle the matter later," had wisely calculated such a step.[43]

c. *The Impact of the Second World War and Holocaust in Romania on Bessarabia and Transdniestria*

The incorporation of Bessarabia in June 1940 into the Soviet Union was not a desired act for most Moldovans but rather an expectation of something new and better than in Romania because of the dissatisfaction with the discriminatory policy from Bucharest. However, the expected improvement was impeded by two factors: full Romanian participation in operation *Barbarossa* and the Holocaust in Romania – other external causes, which would leave a psychological trauma on the older population of Bessarabia and especially Transdniestria.[44] As a result of such events, three factors would became crucial in developing the future MSSR: the Moldovans/Romanians of Bessarabia would be considered *unreliable* citizens of the Soviet Union (allies of Fascist Romania), the Transdniestrians would on the contrary play the key role in the life of the future Republic (MSSR), and the policy of the Soviet Union would result in significant purges of Moldovans and Romanians. Eventually, Transdniestrian elite to mobilize the population during the 1992 conflict used that historical factor (memory) extensively.

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[42] Anthony Read and David Fisher, *The Deadly Embrace: Hitler, Stalin and the Nazi-Soviet Pact 1939-1941* (New York/ London: Norton & Company), 254.

[43] Nicolas Dima, *Bessarabia and Bukovina* (Eastern European Monographs, Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1982), 27.

[44] Radu Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu Regime, 1940-1944* (Chicago: Ivan R Dee, 2000), 289. More than 45, 000 Jews – probably closer to 60,000 – were killed in Bessarabia and Bukovina by Romanian and German troops in 1941. At least 75,000 deported Romanian Jews died as a result of the expulsion to Transdniestria.

d.   *The 1940 to 1991 Soviet Policy Impact*

The Soviet period reflected the old-fashioned Russian goal of dominance over the occupied territory with one addition: the policy was amplified by Communist ideology directed toward Soviet nation building, full secularization, repression, and "Russification." Furthermore, the Soviet policy would be brutally directed toward completely eliminating Romanian ties and Sovietizing the region. As Nicolas Dima concluded:

> Hundreds of thousands of Russians, Ukrainians, and others poured into Moldavia demonstrating that the Soviet goal was not economic [deportation of healthy Moldovan labor contradicts such a statement], but political, namely denationalization and russification. Dispersing and mixing various ethnic groups has been the Russian way of domination and assimilation ever since the beginning of Moscow's expansion.[45]

As a result, the artificial nation building of the new Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (Bessarabia and Transdniestria) would be fatally impeded and later would produce the tensions between two historical sub-regions. Those tensions, especially regarding language and identity, would also be used by external and internal forces to manipulate the Transdniestrian conflict in the region. The reason would again become traditional external geo-political tensions between Moscow and Bucharest about rights on historical territory.

Initially, the policy of the Soviet Union after the annexation of Bessarabia in 1940 was directed toward the forceful industrialization, collectivization, and liquidation of the "exploiting class" (the MASSR [Transdniestria] had experienced it since 1924): "over 13,000 Soviet *specialists* and party activists were assigned to Moldavia and most of them came from Russia, the Ukraine and Byelorussia."[46] The situation was worsened by the general reluctant attitude of the Romanian/Moldovan majority to cooperate with Soviet authorities regarding reforms.[47] According to findings of Nicolas Dima,

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[45] Nicolas Dima, *Bessarabia and Bukovina* (Eastern European Monographs, Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1982), 47.

[46] Nicolas Dima, *Bessarabia and Bukovina* (Eastern European Monographs, Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1982), 43.

[47] Valeriu Pasat, *Severe Truth of History: Deportation from the Territory of the Moldavian SSR 40-50s* (Chisinau: Momentul, 1998), 148. (Russian) (Translation by author.)

from July 1940 until June 1941 the Soviet authorities carried out massive arrests and deportations, particularly along the new Romanian border, coupled with countless summary executions. [According to one refugee] prior to imminent outbreak of war, the Soviets deported some 150,000 people from Bessarabia and Bukovina to Siberia and Central Asia.[48]

After the war, the Soviets, facing the population challenges, secretly prepared and conducted on the territory of the new Republic operation *South* for the final *liquidation* of the anti-Soviet and "capitalist" (hostile) elements.[49] As a result of that operation, 42,975 people were permanently deported to Siberia and Kazakhstan.[50] That was not the only aspect of the Soviet Communist strategy toward the new republic; secularization and repression were the other techniques of the Communists in Moldavia.

In Moldavia, Communist secularization was amplified by the traditional struggle between the Moscow and Bucharest Eparchies about religious dominance in Bessarabia. Therefore, the liquidation of religion in Moldavia carried the further goal of wiping out the Romanian past.[51] The most famous example was the Soviet secret operation *North* conducted on April 1, 1951, which was directed against the Romanian Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant religions in Moldavia. In the operation, 2,617 religious people were deported from Moldavia, and many churches and prayer houses were destroyed.[52] Such policies left bitterness and amplified the antagonism between the Romanian and Russian Eparchies.

Additionally, the Soviet authorities realized that on the territory of Bessarabia they faced not only resistance to communist reform but also resistance to national integration into the new type of *Soviet people* identity (internationalized, but presumably Russified due to the majority of the Russian nation). The first step was language reform, which consisted of transforming the Romanian language with a Latin

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[48] Nicolas Dima, *Bessarabia and Bukovina* (Eastern European Monographs, Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1982), 44.

[49] Valeriu Pasat, *Severe Truth of History: Deportation from the Territory of the Moldavian SSR 40-50s* (Chisinau: Momentul, 1998), 219. (Russian) (Translation by author.)

[50] Ibid, 260.

[51] Nicolas Dima, *Bessarabia and Bukovina* (Eastern European Monographs, Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1982), 46.

[52] Valeriu Pasat, *Severe Truth of History: Deportation from the Territory of the Moldavian SSR 40-50s* (Chisinau: Momentul, 1998), 361. (Russian) (Translation by author.)

alphabet into Moldovan with a Cyrillic alphabet. According to Nicolas Dima: "500 teachers from Russia and 380 from the Ukraine and Byelorussia were brought in a hurry in September 1940. They actually started the russfication of public education … designed to weaken the Romanian ethnic character of Moldavia."[53] That technique had already been successfully conducted in the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Transdniestria) since 1924. As a second step, Russian was introduced as the official language, which made the Romanian/Moldovan language useless, forcing the children to study Russian. Later, that would produce the antagonism between Moldovans and other nationalities. Furthermore, the Soviet government implemented a theory about the Moldovan identity, which was, according to Soviet historians, different from Romanian. According to such falsified history, Romanians/Moldovans were taught that they were south Slavic people different from Romania and the Moldavian language was a south dialect of the Slavic language.[54] The theory had a problem because over the Prut River lived Romanians who also called themselves Moldovans because they lived in the historical principality Moldova. Additionally, the same heroes were heroes of both Romanians and Moldovans along the Prut River. All of that antagonized the relations between the USSR and Communist Romania.

The Romanian authority, according to Nicolas Dima, never lost sight of Bessarabia at that time and did everything possible to sustain the Romanian spirit among the Moldovans:

> Romania replaced the old 50 kilowatt radio transmitter of Iasi, the capital of historical Moldova located a few miles from the Soviet Moldavia, with a 1,000 kilowatt transmitter. The new radio stations heard now at a great distance broadcast primarily programs about Romanian culture, history, and literature and reminds the *Soviet Romanians* [Bessarabians] that they are not forgotten.[55]

Bucharest actively promoted the policy of cultural exchanges (theater, arts) striving to sustain in the Moldavian population a feeling of national pride of Romania. As a result, by 1970 the new Moldovans began nationally to awaken (the previous Bessarabian

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[53] Nicolas Dima, *Bessarabia and Bukovina* (Eastern European Monographs, Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1982), 43-44.

[54] From the author's personal experience of being in a Soviet school.

intelligentsia had fled the country or been purged) and claim more openly their truly Romanian identity. That was accompanied by growing local antagonism toward Moscow. For instance,

> in fall of 1970 on the sidewalks and the huge windows of the Kishinev (Chisinau) Press House, as well as the walls of the University, Interior Ministry, and nr.1 High School of Kishinev, were painted big lettered slogans such as 'Russian go home,' 'Moldavia for Moldavians', and 'We want to be with Romania.'[56]

Thus, the antagonism between Moscow and Bucharest never pacified over the Bessarabian question during the twentieth century.

In short, after World War II, the tragic development of that region was shaped by two external actors: Russia, later USSR, and Romania. Particularly, the Soviet policy along with the growing new Moldovan elites and national awakening would collide with the old xenophobic mood of the Romanian Holocaust, especially in Transdniestria, resulting in a conflict at the time of the Soviet collapse. That conflict, despite its internal character, would again be employed by external and internal forces for attaining their political objectives. The obvious internal tool for such external policy was the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, revived as the Transdniestrian Moldavian Republic in 1991, which has always had an elite loyal to Moscow, the majority being Russian and Ukrainian.

2. Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Future Transdniestria) – External Tool for Psychological Influence and Control in Bessarabia and the MSSR

> The establishment of the MASSR in 1924 served two important ends in the emerging foreign policy of the Soviet Union. First, the new republic facilitated the penetration of Soviet propaganda into the kingdom of Romania … Second, it ensured that the Bessarabian question remained a topical issue in international politics and a thorn in the side of Romanian politics at the League of Nations.[57]

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[55] Nicolas Dima, *Bessarabia and Bukovina* (Eastern European Monographs, Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1982), 50.

[56] Ibid, 53.

[57] Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford: Hoover Institutions Press, 2000), 63.

Thus, a purposely created, artificial *Moldovan* autonomous republic with a Ukrainian majority (50%) served as a foreign policy tool of the Soviet Union. The current Transdniestrian elite has been trying to repeat those techniques in almost a mirror way since 1990.

Table 2.   Population of Moldavian ASSR by Nationality: 1924[58]

NATIONALITY	TOTAL	PERCENT
Romanians/Moldovans	172,419	30.3
Ukrainians	277,515	48.8
Russians	48,868	8.6
Jews	48,564	8.5
Germans	10,739	1.9
Bulgarians	6,026	1.1
Poles	4,853	0.8
Total	568,984	100.0

In fact, Transdniestria, in spite of its significant Moldovan population, historically has never been a part of Romania or the Moldovan Principality. The Dniestr River was the historical demarcation between the Turkish and Russian influence; furthermore, historical Moldovan expansion stopped at the Dniestr River. That factor would be manipulated by Russia twice during this century while making policy toward Romania from 1918 to 1940 and the Republic of Moldova during the Transdniestrian conflict. Furthermore, the Transdniestria represented even more multi-national territory than Bessarabia. However, the Soviet authorities, despite only 30.3 percent of the population being Romanians and Moldovans, decided to establish the new republic as the *Moldovan* Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (table 2).

The Communist authorities employed different techniques in that republic to attain their external goals. First, Moscow implemented a program forging the *Moldovan* language and the *truly Moldovan* nationality, which would later be used in Bessarabia.[59] Second, they spread propaganda in Bessarabia about the perfect life under communism. For example, Charles King points out: "the MASSR authorities even ordered that bright

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[58] Nicolas Dima, *Bessarabia and Bukovina* (Eastern European Monographs, Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1982), 24.

[59] Even nowadays, the Republic of Moldova has two major crises: identity and language. People still argue about language - Romanian versus Moldovan and about identity - Romanian versus Moldovan. Those questions became political debates.

lights be kept perpetually burning in Tiraspol, which looked across the river to the Romanian city of Bender, in order to impress upon the Bessarabian peasants the advantage of life in the technologically progressive Soviet republic."[60] Such techniques would be again used from 1991 until the present by the authorities of the declared Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic, despite the deepest economic crisis in the region. Finally, after the annexation of Bessarabia to the USSR in 1940, the new Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic was created from Bessarabia and *raions* (Russian county) from the MASSR with a high concentration of Moldovans, while others, Ukrainians and Russians, were returned to the Ukrainian authority.

From that point until the collapse of the Soviet Union, Transdniestria, being considered loyal to Moscow, would be in a privileged position and serve as a basis of the Communist dominance in the MSSR. All heavy industry has been constructed on the territory of the left bank of the Dniestr River. Internal (Soviet) immigrants arrived to work in the new factories, increasing the Russian and Ukrainian portions of the population, while Moldovan workers were sent to other Soviet industrialized regions. Finally, the presence of the Soviet military in that region played the crucial role even during the conflict between central Moldovan and the Transdniestrian authorities. Most Soviet units and ammunition depots were concentrated in Transdniestria. Only a few Moldovan Soviet officers had the luxury to serve in the MSSR. In retrospect, the area became a haven (mild climate, low prices, beautiful nature) for retired military personnel and their families. Like Belarus and the Ukrainian Crimea, Transdniestria became one of the most highly Sovietized territories within the union.

The primary spiritual loyalty of Transdniestria was not to Russia but to Moscow, when it ruled the entire Soviet Union.[61] After the disintegration of Communism, Transdniestrians declared: "We did not break up with the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union broke up with us and dissolved."[62] Thus, the population of Transdniestria can be considered as a successful experiment of forging a new Soviet identity and loyalty to

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[60] Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford: Hoover Institutions Press, 2000), 56.

[61] Ibid, 184.

[62] From personal experience talking with Transdniestrians.

Moscow. In contrast, by that time, the rest of Moldavia grew a new elite, which started awakening regarding their truly Romanian/Moldovan identity. However, the new elite and population truly believe that MSSR (including Transdniestria) – the new Republic of Moldova – is their motherland and not Romania or historical Moldova. Therefore, by 1990, a new conflict was already boiling: conflict between elites from the MSSR (Bessarabian part) and the privileged elite of Transdniestria, which would employ the cultural and linguistic differences as a weapon to attain their objectives.

Many political specialists, who monitored the situation in the MSSR from outside, predicted such development (1982): "It appeared, however, that Moldavian cities are rather more Russianized than truly Russified. In the future, they may become the main linguistic battlefield between Romanian [Moldovans] and Russian. The linguistic future largely depends upon the composition of future urban migrations."[63] If a foreign specialist was able to make such a prediction then Soviet officials were likely aware of that growing peril and had different alternatives to respond. Nowadays, to prove it would be difficult since many national archives do not allow research of that period. However, frequent visits by Moscow officials, including Russian Vice-president Rutskoi, to Tiraspol without acknowledging Chisinau[64] and transferring of all KGB files from Chisinau to Tiraspol [not to Moscow] in autumn of 1989 suggest indirect Soviet involvement in or even active planning of a strategy for the future Transdniestrian *Moldovan* Republic.[65]

3. Role of Elites

The process of the collision of two different elites, pro-Moscow (Transdniestrian) and local (nationally awakened), was facilitated when Mikhail Gorbachev announced

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[63] Nicolas Dima, *Bessarabia and Bukovina* (Eastern European Monographs, Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1982), 114-115.

[64] *TRANSDNISTRIAN CONFLICT. History of the Conflict, 7*

<http://home.moldpac.md/~savelkin/Hystor_of_conf.htm> (08 November 2002).

[65] Oazu Nantoi, "Research about the Situation in the Eastern Districts of the Republic of Moldova (1992-2000)," *Publications,* Institute for Public Science (Republic of Moldova), 1 <http://www.ipp.md/publications> (11 August 2002). (Romanian) (Translation by author.)

Glasnost and *Perestroika*. That reform basically weakened the Communist Party's control allowing the local population (elite) to be democratically elected in the Supreme Council of the MSSR.

In fact, after the annexation of Bessarabia to the USSR in 1940, most of the Romanian/Moldovan elite immigrated or tragically underwent Soviet repressions and deportations. The basis for the new MSSR leadership became the Soviet and loyal elite from Transdniestria. Furthermore, another mistake of the Soviet policy was an isolationist policy toward the rural majority Moldovan population. According to Suslov, the late Kremlin leading ideologist, the Soviet Union in 1980s had three antagonisms: "national antagonism, rural-urban antagonism and white-blue collar antagonism."[66]

In the Moldavian SSR, various factors amplified all these antagonisms. National antagonism was growing naturally as in all parts of the USSR due to the mistaken Soviet national policy. This was amplified by the rural-urban antagonism in the MSSR, which was characterized by a rural majority Moldovan versus an urban minority Russian-speaking population (elite factor reflected the same). For instance, Nicolas Dima found: "for long the Soviet leaders actually pursued a deliberate policy of isolating the mostly rural Moldavians 'from the political and urban-technological order' of their own republic dominated by Russians and Ukrainians."[67] Third, white-blue collar antagonism also had a national color. The ruling Communist Party of Moldova was established in August of 1940 on the basis of the MASSR (Transdniestria) organization. In fact, the Russians and Ukrainians dominated within the party for most of the Soviet period. According to Charles King research: "The few Moldovans who found prominent positions in the local and central organs were invariably from Transdniestria … rather than from Bessarabia."[68] However, by the 1980s, the new Moldovan elite born after 1940 started to emerge, occupying more and more leading positions throughout the MSSR, inevitably leading toward conflict among the elites.

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[66] Nicolas Dima, *Bessarabia and Bukovina* (Eastern European Monographs, Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1982), 133.

[67] Ibid, 52.

[68] Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford: Hoover Institutions Press, 2000), 98. From 1941 till 1989, First Secretaries of the Communist Party of Moldova, principal ruling attribute of the Communist system, were five Ukrainians, one Russian, and two Transdniestrians. The first Bessarabian became the First Secretary in 1989.

Thus, by the end of 1990s, in the Republic of Moldova the three antagonisms noted by Suslov had taken on a strong national color; most important, the local elite for the first time became dominant over the former *privileged* Transdniestrian elite. Both elites recognized the growing national awareness and national antagonism and consequently employed these factors as weapons to attain their political objectives, which resulted in the military conflict. Even in that situation, the Russian and Romanian authorities were also carefully monitoring the situation striving to influence the conflict in their favor.

B.   DEMISE OF THE SOVIET UNION – FINAL SPARK FOR THE CONFLICT

This thesis does not analyze the Transdniestrian conflict as ensuing only from internal causes but rather in the context of geo-political interests of outside powers. However, the internal factors should not be ignored because they have been manipulated to attain the political goals of the interested parties in the conflict. Furthermore, the Soviet ideology profoundly impacted the new Moldovan identity and people, who truly started believing that Transdniestria was part of their state.

The catalyst for the conflict was again an external factor, the shattering of the Soviet Union, which resulted in a temporary regional power vacuum and democratization of Moldavian life accompanied by national awakening. At this time, the gravest concern of Moscow and Transdniestria was the possibility that historical Bessarabia would rejoin Romania. Domestic changes in 1989 in language, identity, and revision of history were contributing to such conclusions. However, the subsequent conflict reflected a miscalculation by Moscow and the Transdniestrian elite about the dedication of the new Moldovan elite and population toward their new motherland, the Republic of Moldova, and not Romania, which became friendly but not their political homeland. Therefore, by seeking to create a Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic, the external actors achieved their objective of not permitting the unification of the Republic of Moldova (Bessarabia) with Romania. However, while this was perceived in Russia and Ukraine as a Moldovan goal, it was not widely supported in the Republic of Moldova. In short, the conflict, although partly internal, proved also to be amplified by historically antagonistic tensions between the Soviet Union (later on Russia) and Romania.

### 1.	National Awakening Versus Transdniestrian Antagonism

Due to the democratization of the Soviet Union, the MSSR underwent several objective changes regarding national development. First, the population of the MSSR discovered the truth about the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact (1939) and their actual fate. This made a large impression on the new growing Moldovan intelligentsia. Following vigorous debates and a massive demonstration, "on August 31, 1989, the MSSR Supreme Soviet adopted three new languages laws that declared Moldovan the 'state language' of the republic, mandated the transition to the Latin alphabet, [and] implicitly recognized the unity of the Moldovan and Romanian languages."[69] The Russian language was not eliminated from public life, but it only received a status of a language of intra-national communication. Such a political move was possible due to a majority of ethnic Moldovan elites in the Supreme Soviet. Unfortunately, that political step sparked opposition from Slavic and Turkish minorities.[70] Such negative attitudes toward reforms were strengthened by a declaration of the Popular Front (a new national movement) that the language question was the first step in a mass movement for integrating Romanian nation and rejecting the Russian dominance.[71] That declaration antagonized the majority of the Transdniestrian and Gagauzy elites, who made opposite mirror steps playing on the ethnical tensions.

As a result of those policies, in August 1990, the Turkish minority in southern Moldova decaled a separate *Gagauz Republic,* and Transdniestrians declared their own *Dniestr Republic* in September 1990. Both steps seemed the same but had distinctions. The Gagauz demands were fairly ethnic: to preserve ethnic sovereignty, equal representation, and vote in the political/public life of Moldova. The Transdniestrian demands, although initially seemed as ethnic, mostly were political from becoming independent to joining Russia or Ukraine. The Transdniestrian elite (see previous section about the elite and Table 3), mostly Russians and Ukrainians having been privileged in

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[69] Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford: Hoover Institutions Press, 2000), 120.

[70] Helen Fedor ed., *Belarus and Moldova: Country Studies* (Washington: GPO, 1995), 109-10.

[71] Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford: Hoover Institutions Press, 2000), 142.

Soviet times and fearing to become inferior in the new conditions, became the major factor for mobilizing the local population and promoting the antagonism toward the new central Moldovan authority.[72]

Table 3.   National Composition of the Communist Party of Moldova[73]

	Moldovan %	Ukrainian %	Russian %	Jewish %
1925	6.3	31.6	41.6	15.7
1940	17.5	52.5	11.3	15.9
1989	47.8	20.7	22.2	2.5

2.   Transdniestrian Policy – Mirror Reflection of the Previous Soviet Policy; External Factors

The Transdniestrian elite by the end of the 1980s saw the new situation emerging in the Moldavian SSR and prepared to act to defend its position, apparently developing plans that they later followed. Moldovan national renaissance, language, political and cultural reforms were seen in Transdniestria as evidence of Moldova's intention to leave the Soviet Union and to join Romania. Therefore, Tiraspol continued its own preparation for secession with open Moscow support.[74] An external factor, the 1991 Soviet *putsch*, unpredictably changed both plans. If Soviet putschists had succeeded in their intention, the Dniestr Moldovan Republic would have certainly been another repetition of the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of 1924 with similar consequences.

In January 1990, the leaders of Transdniestria organized a referendum, in which a reported *96 percent* of voters favored a self-governing status (autonomy) for Transdniestria within MSSR.[75] In response to the declaration of Moldovan sovereignty within the Soviet Union, a congress of local authorities on the east bank declared a separate Dniestr *Moldovan* Republic (DMR) on September 2, 1990. Their principal claim

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[72] The leader of Transdniestria, Igor Smirnov, Russian born in 1941 in Petropavlovsc-Kamciatskiy, Russia, was in Moldova since 1987; former First Secretary of Communist Party (till 1989), Ivan Grosul (Transdniestrian Moldovan), also retreated in Transdniestria, where he became Minister of Foreign Affairs of Transdniestria; Commander and Chief of Staff of the Russian 14th Army dislocated in Tiraspol, Lieutenant-General Ghenadii Yakovlev (Russian) and Colonel Stefan Chitac (Transdniestrian), headed the DMR Armed Forces; the internal security forces of the DMR have been controlled by general Vadim Shevtsov, Russian, (former name Antiufeev), the former OMON commander in Latvia considered responsible for the deaths of protectors in Riga in January 1991. Valerii Litskai, former adviser of Smirnov, current Minister of Foreign Affairs is also Russian. For more detail information see Charles King, Ch. 9.

[73] Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford: Hoover Institutions Press, 2000), 99.

[74] Ibid, 189.

was that DMR was not a part of Moldova but a part of the Soviet federation. The interesting fact is again the use of Moldovan in the name of the republic – DMR. According to estimates (see table 1) the Moldovans were only 39.9 percent of the population. Thus, at the declaration of the Dniestr *Moldovan* Republic, the majority of the populations were Ukrainian (28.3 percent) and Russian (25.5 percent), totally 53.8 percent with other nationality 6.4 percent (obviously Russian-speaking). Consequently, that step was again an attempt to "repeat history" by holding the ground for the psychological attack on the Republic of Moldova (either independent or in Romania) about superior life in the Soviet Union; or the local elite were unwilling to lose power to Ukraine in case of annexation. The Ukrainian interest in regaining the historical land in case the Republic of Moldova joined Romania in 1991 to 1992 has never been revealed officially. However, the ordinary population widely discussed that possibility. The problem with such a move was the possibility it would set a precedent for the Russian claim to retake historical Russian Crimea from Ukraine.

Surprisingly, the Transdniestrian authorities acted quickly. In the unsettled situation they shocked the central Moldovan authorities by aggressive actions. According to Charles King, events quickly spiraled out of Chisinau's control:

> Transdniestrian workers armed themselves with weapons from Soviet army stores located in Transdniestria and began to take over police stations and government institutions along the east bank. At the same time, police units still loyal to the central government took up positions along the river, barricading bridges and at times exchanging shots with their counterparts to the east. Throughout the fall and spring of 1990 and 1991, the Transdniestrian side consolidated its hold over the region … also gained firm control over portions of the west bank, especially the important city of Bender. [76]

The latter move appeared a serious provocation or miscalculation by the Tiraspol authorities. If they had not crossed the Dniestr River, their move for independence could have been justified. However, the last action virtually cut Moldova from the Soviet Union (transforming into the CIS): the major rail and roads links to Ukraine and beyond ran through Transdniestria and especially through Bender and Tiraspol. Thus, the

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[75] Typical % of Communist election. The observers to election were not admitted.

[76] Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford: Hoover Institutions Press, 2000), 189.

development seems as if one state sought to dictate its will on the other coercively. However, again another external variable would intervene in the entire process of the conflict development – the Moscow coup in August 1991.

The Moscow coup in August 1991 severed all the Transdniestrians' plans. Within days of the collapse of the *putsch*, on August 27, 1991, the Parliament declared Moldova an independent republic and officially took control of the Soviet and party assets on Moldovan territory. The reaction of the Transdniestrians to the coup was completely the opposite. Elites of Transdniestria, including Igor Smirnov (leader), openly supported the putschists calling them saviors of the USSR and promising even military assistance.[77] However, Transdniestria facing dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991 now had to find another exit from a politically losing situation. All these critical conditions and antagonisms were slowly but steadily leading toward military collision.

3. Eruption of Military Action

In fact, the military actions did not represent clear military or political objectives but rather a deliberate attempt to break the negotiation between Tiraspol and Chisinau about a peaceful settlement of the political confrontation. That attempt was accompanied by an appeal to all Slavs to come to their assistance, a propaganda war, and indirect but decisive military support from the 14th Russian (initially Soviet) Army.[78]

Intense military actions erupted when the Moldovan police officers tried to disarm the Transdniestrian armed irregulars around Dubasary (city in Transdniestria) on December 13, 1991. That incident sparked a series of the clashes along the River. According to Charles King: "Tension escalated over the spring and summer 1992, leaving hundreds killed. Bridges across the Dniestr were mined or destroyed by the Transdniestrians, who also mounted extensive military operations west of the Dniestr."[79] In response, the Moldovan authorities announced a state of emergency. However, such

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[77] Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford: Hoover Institutions Press, 2000), 189. There were facts of direct military Transdniestrian assistance to Moscow coups in 1991 and 1993 widely transmitted even by the Russian mass media.

[78] The explanation of many Russian officers from the 14th Army was simple: "We could not open fire on women and children, while they attacked our ammunition depots and armed themselves." Also, see Charles King, 189.

[79] Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford: Hoover Institutions Press, 2000), 193.

actions would be too late; according to the Moldovan web site: "Transdniestria had managed to create its own paramilitary forces, well-equipped, and with local and Russian Cossacks and elements of the Russian 14th Army on its side [which was considered decisive]."[80] Therefore, all other attempts of Chisinau to restore authority over the region were unsuccessful. The Transdniestrian population, according to Kaufman, was "influenced by manipulation (propaganda): the Tiraspol press was telling voters that the alternatives to independence was to submit to a 'new inquisition' by Moldovan authorities, and eventually to be swallowed up in an extremely nationalist Romania."[81] Furthermore, the administration of Transdniestria, Kaufman states, "launched a campaign of harassment to force out those pro-Chisinau policemen. By April [1992], the fighting escalated into position warfare, with Chisinau's forces defending entire villages, where they still had a presence, and the Dniestrian forces trying to drive them out."[82] All the warfare had been accompanied by a series of fragile cease-fires.

The turning point occurred in June 1992 despite the fact that representatives of the Transdniestria received seats in the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova and actually started negotiating for peaceful political conflict resolution. For unexplained reasons, the Transdniestrians made an unusual political mistake, which from their view was a strategically gained objective. If they had not made this error, the Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic would have probably been independent nowadays. They attacked the police station in the Bender city on the right bank of the Dniestr River, taking control of the city. Their main argument was to protect the huge largely Russian-speaking population. However, the Transdniestrian authority initially claimed their *historical* right to be independent, which meant respecting the historical border – the Dniestr River. The reality was that Bender represented a large industrial complex and artery, linking Chisinau with Ukraine and Russia. This could be used as a bargaining tool.

The question arose: why would a seceding region claiming to be independent need a strategically important key objective on the opposite side? In response, the

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[80] *TRANSDNISTRIAN CONFLICT. History of the Conflict, 10* <http://home.moldpac.md/~savelkin/Hystor_of_conf.htm> (08 November 2002).

[81] Stuart J. Kaufman, "Spiraling to Ethnic War: Elites, Masses, and Moscow in Moldova's Civil War," *International Security,* volume 21, issue 2 (Autumn, 1996), 128.

[82] Ibid, 129.

Moldovan forces were compelled to launch a counterattack on Bender succeeding in retaking the city. According to Charles King: "In a climactic battle for Bender in June, the 14th Army openly intervened, driving the Moldovans troops out of the city and inflicting heavy losses."[83] As a result, Russia officially became involved in the conflict, which made it easy to sustain the status quo of the Transdniestrian side that had gained most of the territory they wanted, including industrialized Bender on the other side of the Dniestr River. Chisinau saw little productive in counterattacking the 14th Russian Army. As a result, the Russian President Yeltsin and the Moldovan President Snegur signed an agreement on July 21, 1992, stipulating:

> cessation of hostilities, the creation of a security zone along the river, the deployment of a tripartite peacekeeping forces composed of six Russian paratroop battalions (under separate operational command from the Fourteenth Army) and three each from Moldova and the DMR, and the initiation of talks on finding a political solution to the conflict.[84]

In short, the military action proved to be more advantageous for the Transdniestrian side, which succeeded in persuading neighboring Ukraine and Russia to intervene for the purpose of *defending of all Slavs*. The involvement of the 14th Russian Army officially sustained the Transdniestria's gains, leaving the situation ripe for future political battles, accidental impacts and for not permitting the Moldovan-Romanian unification, which meanwhile became an obsolete argument. In addition, the internal conflict also inflamed the relations between the Soviet Union (later on Russia) and Romania, which were historically antagonistic. Therefore, the Russia-Romania-Ukraine (geographical proximity) triangle should be considered as an important factor for the peace process, a point that will be demonstrated in the next chapter.

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[83] Charles King, "Eurasia Letter: Moldova with a Russian Face," *Foreign Policy*, no. 97 (Winter 1994), 111.

[84] Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford: Hoover Institutions Press, 2000), 196.

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III. CONFLICT - RESOLUTION PROCESS

This thesis argues that even though conflict resolution is an internal matter, external factors will play a major role in the finality of the political agreement. As long as an agreement is not achieved among the major external players, any internal agreement will always be vulnerable and fragile in the long run.

Chapter III demonstrates that the peace process has been conducted through internal negotiations and international negotiations. The negotiations demonstrate how external factors produced changes, particularly in the position adopted by the Transdniestrian leaders and the degree of continuity in the position of the central authorities of the Republic of Moldova. This chapter shows that the political deadlock of the conflict reflects the inability of the internal conflicting parties to secure a tangency point to agree upon. It also shows that the external actors have not had overlap in their positions.

A.   NEGOTIATIONS

Political efforts to resolve the Transdniestrian conflict in the Republic of Moldova had started before the major military actions occurred. Therefore, the cease-fire between the Transdniestrian paramilitary units and the Moldovan police and armed units indicated that only political means could resolve the conflict. Basically, no side achieved a victory through military actions because Chisinau did not establish constitutional control over the territory east of the Dniestr River and the Transdniestrian leaders did not achieve de jure independence. Therefore, the agreement signed between the President of the Russian Federation Yeltsin and the President of the Republic of Moldova Snegur on July 21, 1992, in Moscow stipulated two important decisions: first, to disengage the military troops and to create a buffer peacekeeping zone; second, to achieve the resolution by political means. This document indicated several political truths: first, who indeed controlled the Transdniestrian political elite; second, the impossibility to repeat history by creating for a second time the 1924 MASSR in the form of the Dniestr Moldovan

Republic because of the different situation;[85] third, not only Russian traditional interest but the interests of the other external actors collided in that region. This collision had not been present before. Independent Ukraine became a strong actor, Romania has been a traditional actor toward the Republic of Moldova (Bessarabia), and the U.S. became one of the dominant actors in Europe along with the OSCE and NATO. Therefore, even though the conflict-resolution process appears to be an attempt to solve an ordinary internal conflict between two belligerent parties, external factors have apparently played the most important role in the peace process.

First, Moldova, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine started to negotiate to solve the conflict in March and April of 1992. That already indicated that the problem was more than "internal." As a result, a cease-fire was reached on April 7, 1992. It called on the states named above to form a commission to fulfill several agreements reached in the negotiations: to withdraw the military forces; to disarm the irregular formations; to maintain the neutrality; and to define the status of the Russian 14th Army in that area. The Joint Commission had a Joint Military Group represented by 25 officers from each state to monitor the situation. However, the deadlock in the negotiations occurred due to the different interests of the external players. Russia urged the use of the 14th Army as a peacekeeping force (without an international mandate), the inclusion of the *Dniestr Republic* in the negotiations, and the granting of political status to the Dniestrian area in Moldova as prerequisites to any settlement. Moldova demanded the withdrawal of the Russian Army and the use of different international peacekeepers under the UN mandate. Moldovan demands were firmly supported by Romania and Ukraine. The demands did not overlap, making cooperation impossible. Therefore, Russia, thinking in realist terms, used the military factor to increase pressure on Moldova. Dramatic military actions with Russian support occurred in June 1992. This persuaded the new independent Moldovan government to meet all the demands of the Russian side.

In consequence of those events, the militaries signed a cease-fire on July 7, 1992, setting the stage for the next move of the politicians. Soon, on July 13 and 14, Russian

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[85] Republic of Moldova did not have a strong intention of joining Romania. The Ukraine had a Russian-speaking population in Crimea and the same path development; therefore, they revised their policy.

Vice-President Alexander Rutskoi had an official meeting with Moldovan President Snegur. Rutskoi pressed the Moldovan side to grant the left bank of the Dniestr the status of a republic federated with Moldova, which would have created an arrangement that seemed like a confederation. In contrast, Chisinau proposed only autonomy for some highly Russian-speaking populated cities of the Transdniestria. The Russian side was seeking not so much independence of the Transdniestria region (internationally it failed) but legal arrangements for stationing of the 14th Army in the region. In those days many officers of the Russian 300th Paratrooper Regiment still located in Chisinau informally expressed in conversation with Moldovan officers that Russia would never leave Moldova and Transdniestria because Moldova is a zone of vital Russian interest.[86] Thus, the federative (in the form of a confederation) element would have permitted legal stationing of the 14th Army. However, provisions in the Moldova's Constitution about state neutrality implied the inadmissibility of foreign troops being stationed within state territory. That arrangement required the Russian Army to withdraw automatically. Consequently, no clear political solution had been negotiated before signing the main agreement.

Thus, the document signed between the Russian and Moldovan Presidents on 21 July 1992 stipulated: creating a buffer security zone; deploying trilateral peacekeepers from Russia (but not from the 14th Army), from Moldova, and from Transdniestria; establishing a tripartite Joint Control Commission (JCC) with representatives from different governmental organizations; and, most vague, enacting a special statue for the Transdniestrian Region to be elaborated later, including the right to decide its own fate if Moldova changes its statehood. The latter issue could have been negotiated more precisely, but all sides expected to gain from efforts to create a different form of diplomacy in the future. Ironically, the bilateral agreement overturned the multilateral arrangement of April 7, and the previous (April 17, 1992) multilateral proposal about multinational peacekeeping forces from Byelorussia, Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine was rejected without explanation. Furthermore, those countries were excluded even from political negotiations. According to the Moldovan website, only "in March,

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[86] From personal conversation with some Russian officers of the 300th Paratrooper Regiment; many other Moldovan officers heard the same declaration.

1996 at the request of Moldova and Transdniestria at the negotiations was Ukraine invited and later in May, 1997 during the signing of the Memorandum in Moscow was an agreement in principle reached on the participation of Ukraine's observers in the peace keeping mission."[87] This last factor contributed to internationalizing the negotiations.

In fact, the actual internationalization of the process began when the OSCE Mission, approved by the OSCE (Vienna, February 4, 1993), started working in Chisinau on April 25, 1993 signing a Memorandum with the Moldovan Government on May 7. Furthermore, the OSCE reached an Understanding on the Activity of the OSCE Mission in Transdniestria on 25 August 1993 and established a branch office in Tiraspol on February 13, 1995. The main task of the OSCE mission was established as:

> to facilitate the achievement of a lasting, comprehensive political settlement in all its aspects … based on the consolidation of the independence and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova within its current borders and reinforcement of the territorial integrity of the State along with an understanding about a special status for the Transdniestrian region.[88]

However, the mission would start to play a significant role only after 1996, when it had supposedly accumulated enough objective information. Until that time, the bilateral arrangement continued to play a major role.

Several aspects of the negotiations should be emphasized. First, even though antagonism persisted between the former belligerents, bilateral independent expert groups were established to find solutions for keeping the parties inside a "common state." These groups were productive but not successful due to the different political positions of Chisinau and Tiraspol. Nevertheless, those expert groups met regularly under the auspices of the OSCE and state-guarantors, Russia and Ukraine. Second, the main debate turned around the status of Transdniestria, which started rejecting previous agreements about special status and demanding an arrangement, which is usually called "confederation" (its own constitution and parliament, and all other necessary state institutions). It is important to remember that Russia had previously raised those demands

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[87] *TRANSDNISTRIAN CONFLICT. History of the Conflict,* 5
<http://home.moldpac.md/~savelkin/Hystor_of_conf.htm> (8 November 2002).

[88] "The OSCE Mission to Moldova," the *OSCE Official Site*, 1-2
<http://www.osce.org/publications/survery/survey04.htm> (08 November 2002).

during the conflict. The process moved again when the presidents of Moldova, Transdniestria, Russia, Ukraine, and the head of the OSCE Mission signed a Memorandum on May 8, 1997, in Moscow.

The new Memorandum stipulated: "Moldova and Transdniestria build their relations in a common state within the limits of the borders of the MSSR at January 1, 1990 [when Dniestr Moldovan Republic did not exist yet]."[89] However, every side again interpreted the common state differently. Moldova insisted on integrity according to international legislation, but Transdniestria implied the common state should be a confederation. Therefore, all the negotiations for a political solution have been unsuccessful.

Significantly, the peace process has itself changed during the past decade due to several unpredictable external events. First, the developing democracy in Russia started recruiting different political actors, who looked at the situation in Moldova more objectively. Second, the outbreaks in the 1994 and again in the 1999 Russian-Chechen campaigns drastically impacted the view of the Russian politicians toward conflicts, such as Transdniestria. The Chechen separatism influenced the Russian political elite to renounce the ideas of supporting the self-determination of the Russians living in the "near abroad;"[90] second, Moscow started looking more warily at conflicts similar to the Chechen one. The OSCE, most European actors, and the U.S. strongly insisted Russia withdraw troops from regions such as Moldova and Georgia. The culmination was reached during the OSCE Istanbul summit in 1999, when the Russian President announced the withdrawal of the Russian troops from Moldova by the end of 2002. Second, according to Jow Sawyer, a very important characteristic that Moldova understood was: "every step Chisinau [Moldova] has taken toward Russia has cooled Moscow's ardor for its rebellious friends in Tiraspol."[91] Although the process changed, the demands toward Moldova have remained the same.

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[89] *TRANSDNISTRIAN CONFLICT. History of the Conflict,* 11 <http://home.moldpac.md/~savelkin/Hystor_of_conf.htm> (08 November 2002).

[90] After the break up of the Soviet Union, Russian mass media often called the territory of the former Soviet Union republics as a *near abroad*.

[91] Jon Sawyer, "The Molding of Obedience in Moldova; Russian-Made Rebels Force Republic Back into Fold," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Inc., March 12, 1994, 4 <http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=54b748139f0ad359a00d800…> (24 April 2002).

The peace process has now entered another stage. Obviously, the withdrawal of 14th Army is legally solved. Unless the European status quo changes, Russia appears committed to honor the OSCE obligations. However, another factor has started playing a role. The Transdniestrian conflict is being used for fully committing the Republic of Moldova to cooperate *closely* with Russia and particularly with the CIS, which is Russian-dominated. Specifically, when Moldova tried to take steps toward the European Union integration, the peace process began slowing down. The more Moldova openly declared its interest in improving its relations with the East, the more the conflict pacified. The tactic used in such cases had one common characteristic: during each slow down of the peace process the Transdniestrian authorities did not allow Russian officials in the region and blocked the withdrawal of the 14th Russian Army according to the 1999 OSCE declarations;[92] meanwhile, Russian officials claimed an inability to do anything because of Transdniestrian non-cooperation and Ukrainian demands for expensive compensation for passage through its territory. However, when Moldova reapproaches Russia, Transdniestria suddenly starts obeying Russian high official delegations and the peace process continues.[93] Nevertheless, the conflict resolution has now come under firm international control, which makes such steps easy to detect and to respond to. The last OSCE proposal (2002) for creating a federation in the Republic of Moldova seems to be a logical outcome. However, both sides interpret the federation differently, which can radically impact the future development of Moldovan foreign policy.

In summary, the peace process over the Transdniestrian conflict was initially conducted bilaterally under the Russian influence, excluding active international involvement. That step did not resolve the political conflict but only prolonged the stationing of the 14th Army in that region. Nevertheless, later involvement of the OSCE, dramatic events in Chechnya, and the involvement of Ukraine in the conflict resolution

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[92] According to the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE) about flank restrictions and the 1999 OSCE Istanbul Declarations, the Russian Federation assumed the obligations to withdraw the 14th Army from Moldova.

[93] From personal experience, official news reports about such situations have often been seen on Russian, Moldovan, and Transdniestrian television. See also: Vladimir Muhin, "Transdniestrian Authorities Do Not Allow the Russian Military Assets Out of the Region," *Russian National Information Service-Strana.Ru (2000)* <http://www.strana.ru/How%20much%20munition%20in%20Transnistria.htm> (11 October 2002). (Russian); "The Transdniestrian Authorities Continue to Balk to Admission of the Head of the OSCE Mission to the Depots with the Russian Federation Ammunition," *News Agency INERLIC* (Moldova) <http://www.interlic.md/print/php?id=1032266912&lang=eng> (17 September 2002).

internationalized the process allowing the implementing of previous agreements. However, the main question about the status of Transdniestria is not solved yet. The status of Transdniestria remains a bargaining tool for Russia to influence Moldova's future development in the direction of moving "more East than West" (especially on the question of practically joining the EU). Even if an internal agreement is reached and Transdniestria becomes part of the common federation, the situation will be fragile. The more Moldova tries to distance itself from Russia, the more likely that the Transdniestrian conflict will appear again, creating a new disturbance for Moldova and for the region.

B.   POLITICAL DEADLOCK OF THE CONFLICT

The political deadlock of the conflict illustrates the inability of Chisinau and Tiraspol to find a political tangency point on which they could agree. Many politicians in Moldova have started perceiving that the main obstacle to resolving the conflict is the "totalitarian" regime in Transdniestria and its leader, Igor Smirnov. For instance, the leader of the Moldovan Social-Democratic Party, Oazu Nantoi, stresses:

> If Igor Smirnov gives up at the negotiation table, that will mean his immediate end as a representative of Transdniestria. The Transdniestrian regime, being essentially a totalitarian regime, can neither be 'intimidated' nor 'influenced' to change its nature and to renounce its own interests. Meanwhile, conflict resolution cannot be found in the triangle Chisinau – Tiraspol - Moscow because of a simple fact, it does not exist there.[94]

In fact, the Tiraspol regime suppresses the political opposition parties; free mass media is unthinkable in Transdniestria.[95] According to several independent sources, the regime tried to smuggle weapons across the Ukrainian border.[96] Recently, the regime even

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[94] Oazu Nantoi, "Research about the Situation in the Eastern Districts of the Republic of Moldova (1992-2000)," *Publications,* Institute for Public Science (Republic of Moldova), 11 <http://www.ipp.md/publications> (11 August 2002). (Romanian) (Translation by author.)

[95] "The Opposition Party is Liquidated in Transdniestria," *Reporter. md (2001),* Information Agency REPORTER-MD <http://www.reporter.md/page5.php?id=1034343140&what=1> (15 October 2002). (Russian) (Translation by author.)

[96] Ibid, 2. Also see "Ukrainian Communists' Leader Accuse Kiev Officials in Favoring Armament Smuggling from Transdniestria," *BASA-PRESS (2002),* Moldova Azi <http://www.azi.md/print/20726/Ro> (16 September 2002); "Legal Structures of the Ukraine Caught a Big Contraband Lot from Transdniestria," *BASA-PRESS (2002),* Moldova Azi, <http://www.azi.md/print/20019/Ro> (24 July 2002); "Presidents of Russia, Ukraine and Moldova Requested from the Customs and Border Agencies to Put an End to the Contraband at the Transdniestrian Border," *BASA-PRESS* (2002) <http://www.basa.md/news/shownews.asp?ID=77120&PP+TOP-NEWS&PAC=First&Pagel…> (19 March 2002). (Russian) (Translation by author.)

started harassing the Russian troops in the region concerning withdrawal and neutralizing munitions. The OSCE and other states cannot influence this de facto independent regime. Additional conventional wisdom is that the main independent cause for deadlock in political negotiations is the totalitarian Tiraspol regime amplified by personal antagonism between the government officials of Moldova and the authorities of the self-declared Dniestr Moldovan Republic. As President of the Republic of Moldova, Vladimir Voronin, said in interview to the *Russian Newspaper* and the newspaper *Trud*:

> Right now there are no problems in Moldova [which existed in 1992], but the Transdniestrian authorities do not want to negotiate because the solution is not to their advantage. I now understand that after our four meetings with the leader of Transdniestria, Igor Smirnov. Therefore, I will not meet with him anymore …. [97]

Similarly, the Transdniestrian leader, Igor Smirnov, in an interview with the Russian newspaper *Izvestia* replied: "I have not maintained any relations with him [President of Moldova] … His actions demonstrate that he is a Moldovan nationalist."[98]

The reality on the ground demonstrates a different picture indicating three main causes for the inability to solve the conflict. The first cause has been an unclear Moldovan foreign policy lacking continuity for the past decade. Second, the commitment of the European states as well as the U.S. to solve the question of the Russian Army in Transdniestria antagonized the Russian and Transdniestrian (pro-Russian) elites. For some Russian political forces Transdniestria became a matter of prestige. Finally, the influence of the other actors brought about change in the peace process. The pro-Romanian political opposition in Moldova has stressed the inevitability of Bessarabia to join Romania while giving Transdniestria the self-determination choice. Romania diplomatically declared that history would demonstrate the truth of this claim. Meanwhile, if Transdniestrian self-determination leads to a request to join Russia, Ukraine can set the condition not to have a *second Russian Kaliningrad situation*[99] and

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[97] "Problems, Estimation, Judgments," *Official Site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic, 4* <http://www.mfa-pmr.idknet.com/smi/index/php?lang=rus&options=1&id=0&next=1> (29 July 2002). (Russian) (Translation by author.)

[98] Ibid, 9.

would seek to influence the former historical territory. In the event that Transdniestria joins Russia, Ukraine will be in a position similar to Lithuania concerning the Russian Kaliningrad district. That will imply a similar dispute over unrestricted passage of the Russian population, merchandise, and possibly militaries through the Ukrainian territory toward the federative Russian subject (Transdniestria). The entire puzzle appears to reveal a collision of external interests. Therefore, even if the internal agreement has come to some logical conclusion, such as federalizing the Republic of Moldova, the additional external causes are still unsolved.

1. Position of the Central Authority of the Republic of Moldova

From the beginning, the official Moldovan position has been based on seeking multi-lateral international agreement with different international organizations' support. That approach presumed the integrity of the unitary republic, neutrality, and the inadmissibility of stationing foreign troops on its territory. The principles emphasized during the negotiations have been: central authorities of Moldova are the only authority responsible for the entirety of Moldova's territory; the conflict should be solved in conformity with international legislation; and Transdniestria should have broad autonomous status in accordance with international laws. The other demands have been one army, one currency, and one customs service. The recent international OSCE proposal federalizing Moldova basically fits the above-mentioned principles. The self-ruling principles in Transdniestria are accepted if they do not contradict Moldova's constitution.

However, the Republic of Moldova has avoided the main and vital question for Transdniestria. The future of small states will depend on their ability to adapt to globalization demands. In other words, being in Europe, small states should determine their economic course and make a decision to join a collective economic organization, such as the EU, CIS or some other. The problem has been a lack of continuity in the Moldovan foreign policy in this area. For instance, Moldova initially joined the CIS structure with the exception of the Treaty of Collective Security, due to its neutrality

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99 The EU-Russian dispute regarding Kaliningrad is about unrestricted passage of Russians through the Lithuania or Poland, when they will join the common Schengen agreement of unrestricted visa regime. The situation seems that if Poland and Lithuania join the EU, the Russian population will be forced to fly or go by sea to the mainland.

status, and after that joined the GUUAM initiative; next, Moldova joined the Stability Pact for the South-Eastern Europe. Also, Moldova declared the intention to join the European Union: "Premier Vasile Tarliev [Moldova] stated on Wednesday [October 16, 2002] that the integration into the European Union remains a priority of Moldova …."[100] On the other hand, the Speaker of the Moldovan Parliament declared that the ruling party "keeps all options open from the election program, including the possibility of the Republic of Moldova to join the Russia-Byelorussia Union…."[101] That intention presents the desire of Chisinau to be in two different economic spheres, which sounds reasonable in its complicated situation. However, Moldova's EU integration contradicts the intention of the Transdniestrian elite to be initially in the Soviet and after that in the Russian sphere of influence, which means the CIS or Russia-Byelorussia Union. Even if Moldova declared its intention to join such a union, the political elite and population will not accept that. According to an opinion poll conducted by Moldovan official media:

> Forty-one percent of the population answered the question about the external orientation of Moldova that the best option would be close cooperation with the CIS, and another 40 percent desire integration into the European Union. Another 4 percent think that the Republic of Moldova should not participate either in the CIS or the EU. About 40 percent consider that Russia interferes in internal Moldovan matters and 46 percent accused Romania.[102]

Thus, radical changes in the Moldovan foreign policy can cause polarization of the society making possible destabilization.

In summary, the Moldova's position toward the Transdniestrian conflict resolution has remained the same. However, the demands toward Moldova have drastically changed during the peace process, recently indicating that conflict resolution will depend on the precise foreign policy toward the East. That revealed that Transdniestria has repeatedly been used as an external factor to influence Moldova.

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[100] "Moldova's Integration into European Union Remains a Priority, Premier Tarlev Says," *BASA-PRESS (2002),* Moldova Azi <http://www.azi.md/print/21176/En> (16 October 2002).

[101] "Speaker of Parliament Declared That Republic of Moldova Keep Intention to Join Russia-Byelorussia Union," *BASA-PRESS* (2003), Moldova Azi <http://www.azi.md/news?ID=22600> (29 January 2003). (Romanian) (Translation by author.)

[102] "Results of the Sociological Poll Asserts Growing Rating of CPM in the Recent Months," *INFOTAG* (2002)*,* Moldova Azi, 2 <http://www.azi.md/news?ID=18688> (17 April 2002). (Romanian) (Translation by author.)

2. Position of the Transdniestrian Leaders

The position of the Transdniestrian leaders deserves respect due to their ability to pursue firmly their main strategic goals by different demands and means: to bring Transdniestria in the Soviet/Russian sphere of influence, and recently to check any unwanted foreign policy movement of Moldova, as was done from 1924 to 1939.

Initially, the Transdniestrian leaders demanded only sovereignty. When it became clear that the Soviet Union would collapse and the Republic of Moldova would be independent, they demanded independence and union with Russia, lately even with Ukraine. Their acceptance of a *common state* (in the 1997 agreement) implied confederation, which fits in that definition. During the entire negotiations, Tiraspol stressed that when Moldova declared the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop pact invalid, it lost the right to Transdniestria. However, the Bender city siege by Transdniestria also did not fit in that Pact. During the process the Transdniestrian leader also tried to play the Ukrainian card by attempting to secure Ukrainian support, but the Russians have always balanced such moves according to the Transdniestrian official website: "We [Tiraspol] appealed to the President of Ukraine asking him to direct the Ukrainian peacekeepers to our region … Ukraine positively replied … But Russians blocked such resolutions."[103] Therefore, after an understanding of the strong international commitment to preserve the integrity of Moldova, their demands changed: to have a confederative state, to have the Russian language as an official language, and to have the name changed from Moldova to Moldavia (the Stalin-era given name). The recent OSCE proposal about federalization they interpreted differently: "V. Litskai [Foreign Minister of Transdniestria] said that federation and confederation are similar."[104] Furthermore, the methods of the Transdniestrian leaders to achieve their goals reflect an old-fashioned *Realpolitik*:

> We will torpedo all their [Chisinau] decisions in all directions [in case of pressure on Transdniestria]. We have experience fighting back and enough

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[103] Valerii Litskai, "Ukrainian Guarantee Should Be Real," *Official Site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic,* 10 <http://www.mfa-pmr.idknet.com/smi/index/php?lang=rus&options=1&id=0&next=1> (29 July 2002). (Russian) (Translation by author.)

[104] "Press-conference of the Minister of the Foreign Affairs of DMR V. Litskai," *Official Site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic, 1*2 <http://www.mfa-pmr.idknet.com/smi/index/php?lang=rus&options=1&id=0&next=1> (29 July 2002). (Russian) (Translation by author.)

tools. In fact, we control about 90 percent of Moldovan transport, 60 percent of the gas pipelines. The water supply lines, including for Chisinau, also come from the Dniestr. Thus, they are in our hands. We can in one hour close all gas pipelines, including – strategic … All schemes are prepared. Our strikes are especially effective in the winter.[105]

Thus, their intention remained unchangeable: to be independent from Chisinau.

In summary, without external pressure the Transdniestrian regime will stick to its demands to have either an independent or semi-independent state. The principal demand will be the right to conduct its own foreign policy. The Moldovan dependence on the Transdniestrian region will be used for bargaining with Chisinau. Because the Transdniestrian leaders have not changed since 1990, the regime can be classified as authoritarian. As noted, the regime suppresses any political movement in the republic and does not allow a free media. In such conditions, the Transdniestrian population is not likely to contribute to the peace process in contrast to the situation in Moldova. Furthermore, Russia is supporting the regime from the outside.

3.   Attitude of the International Organizations[106]

The relevant international organizations are the OSCE and CIS. The initial request for international peacekeepers under the UN mandate failed due to Russia's ability to veto UN Security Council resolutions. Obviously, at that time, the Soviet Union and later Russia still had suspiciousness toward the United States and NATO. Therefore, the appeal to invite the OSCE was accepted because Russia has always argued that only the OSCE should become the collective security organization in Europe. Thus, the OSCE played a vital role by internationalizing the peace process and structuring the independent experts' negotiations. The main OSCE inputs have been: pressing Russia to withdraw troops from Transdniestria and a new vital proposal (2002) about federalizing the

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[105] Valerii Litskai, "Ukrainian Guarantee Should Be Real," *Official Site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic,* 10 <http://www.mfa-pmr.idknet.com/smi/index/php?lang=rus&options=1&id=0&next=1> (29 July 2002). (Russian) (Translation by author.)

[106] For more detailse see, Matthew Evangelista, "Historical Legacies and the Politics of Intervention in the Former Soviet Union," in *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*, ed. Michael E. Brown (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Center for Science and International Affairs John F. Kennedy School of Government Harvard University, 1996), 125-132.

Republic of Moldova. However, overall neither the OSCE nor the CIS could effectively influence the situation, demonstrating that the peace settlement has depended more on bilateral negotiations.

4. Attitude of the Main Co-interested States Toward the Conflict

The interested parties to the conflict can be characterized regionally and geo-strategically. Regional states, Ukraine and Romania, are interested due to historical reasons concerning the Republic of Moldova. Geo-strategic players, Russia, the United States of America, and West-European states, can be interested in resolving the conflict due to strategic goals concerning the Balkans and the Danube River. The latter point represents an echo from the cold war, but should not be ignored.

Romania has tried several times to help the authority of Moldova to balance the situation in the international arena. But the existing antagonism in Transdniestria toward Romania, resulting from the World War II Holocaust, and Romania's traditional cool relations with Russia and now with Ukraine due to the Bessarabia/Bukovina question, led the Romanian factor to be excluded from the process. Generally, attempting to join NATO and the EU, Romania, according to the Moldovan website, has appealed for "identification of some rational resolutions, which would serve to stabilize the Republic of Moldova and the region. Concerning the Russian Federation, it, in Iliescu's [Romanian President] opinion, would help more in the resolution of the problem."[107]

Ukraine played a different role during the entire process. Initially, Ukraine closed its eyes to the passing Russian volunteers and Cossacks to assist Transdniestrians. At that time, according to the Moldovan website, Ukraine declared partial support for Tiraspol:

> Kravchiuk [President of the Ukraine in 1992] expressed his support to Yeltsin and also declared that if Chisinau decides to unite with Romania, then Kiev would be a guarantee of 'free choice' for Transdniestria but for the present moment Ukraine stands for the autonomy of Transdniestria, in the limits of the borders of the Republic of Moldova.[108]

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[107] Flux, "President of Romania, Ion Iliescu, Declared, in Moscow, That Annexation of Bessarabia by the USSR Was a Historical Crime," *MOLDOVA AZI* (Romanian) <http://www.azi.md/print/20018/Ro> (24 July 2002). (Romanian) (Translation by author.)

[108] *TRANSDNISTRIAN CONFLICT. History of the Conflict,* 13 <http://home.moldpac.md/~savelkin/Hystor_of_conf.htm> (8 November 2002).

However, the Ukrainian position radically changed when the same technique for separatism was applied in the Crimean peninsula, almost a duplication of the situation in Transdniestria. From that point on, Kiev played a moderate position claiming only special status for Transdniestria. However, local Ukrainian authorities close to Transdniestria's region had a different view because of their ability to profit from this non-recognized region. According to the Moldovan website, smuggling from Transdniestria through Ukraine became common, indicating close economic cooperation: "Close to the border of the Republic of Moldova [Transdniestria], border troops and the secret service of Ukraine confiscated contraband delivery from Transdniestria, which they evaluated as worth $80,000."[109] Thus, under circumstances of contraband and the Crimea question, Ukraine has moved in favor of supporting the Chisinau claim for integrity, meanwhile being a guarantor for the special status of the Transdniestria.

Russia has always maintained a geo-strategic perspective on Transdniestria by monitoring the actions of Romania, the foreign policy of the Republic of Moldova, and the strategic movements in Europe and the Balkans. Transdniestria has been used only as a tool of coercive diplomacy: "Chairman of the Russian Federation State Duma [parliament] Ghenadii Selezniov declared that his country supported Tiraspol authority for the purpose of *'preserving the sovereignty* of the Republic of Moldova.'"[110] Their policy collided with Ukraine when it was forming the GUUAM initiative. The main idea of the GUUAM initiative was to build oil and gas pipelines from Azerbaijan through Georgia and Ukraine bypassing Russian territory. Moldova was supposed to profit from that (including Transdniestria). However, Transdniestrian authorities declared several times the anti-Russian character of the GUUAM. Therefore, Ukraine did everything possible to avoid Moldovan territory.

However, the main modern interest of Russia slowly became the domination of the Moldovan market and not strategic military plans. For instance, according to the Moldovan website:

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[109] "Enforcement Authority from Ukraine Captured a Big Lot of Contraband from Transdniestria," *INFOTAG,* MOLDOVA AZI (1998-2002, Romanian) <http://www.azi.md/print/20019/Ro> (24 July 2002). (Translation by author.)

[110] "Russian Federation *Oversight* the Sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova," *Reporter-MD (2001)* <http://www.reporter_md.htm> (22 October 2002). (Russian) (Translation by author.)

Pavel Petrovsky [Russian ambassador in Moldova] pointed out that after Vladimir Voronin [with pro-Russian cooperation views] had come to power in Moldova, 'Russian people of business came to see that Moldova has turned its face to Russia: The signature of the Basic Political Treaty with Russia does not at all mean that this holds Moldova away from Europe, as some local party leaders claim … He [advising federation] emphasized that a divided Moldova would never be admitted to either the European Union or other European structures: the longer the Transdniestrian conflict drags on, the farther from Europe Moldova would be finding itself.[111]

Thus, Russia, facing strong barriers to influence the Balkan direction, because of NATO's expansion to include Hungary and possibly (invited at the Prague NATO summit in 2002) Romania and Bulgaria, concentrated on economic matters concerning the Republic of Moldova. Basically, Russia can disturb the Transdniestrian question if Moldova expels Russian business from the region. The danger in such a situation is obviously the possibility for Moldova (having a weak economy) to become completely dependent on Russia. According to the Russian view, the goal has been achieved: the Republic of Moldova remained in the Russian sphere of influence. Consequently, Transdniestria in the near future will be pacified until the next Moldovan attempt to join Romania or integrate completely westward.

The West-European states and the U.S. have paid only geo-strategic attention to the development of the conflict, looking at the similarities to the Crimea, Abkhazia (Georgia), and Tajikistan conflict situations. The main focus has been on pressing Russia for withdrawal of the 14th Army from the region to secure the Balkans and to neutralize the large amount of munitions. The main emphasis has been the territorial integrity of Moldova and an international approach toward conflict resolution. The suggested approach also reflects the internal solution, support for federalization, and diplomatically not touching another sphere of influence. For example, according to the Moldovan news agency "Infotag":

Mr. Soros said he had been shocked at such a proposal [federalization] and at the USA's support of that document. He believes the effect of that document would be Moldova's complete falling under the protectorate of

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111 "Moldova Has Turned Its Face to Russia, Ambassador Petrovsky Says," *INFOTAG*, MOLDOVA AZI <http://Moldova520-Russia.htm> (13 August 2002). (Translation by author.)

Russia. 'This is very dangerous for Moldova …' Russian protectorate and Russia's participation [in the Moldovan economy] in privatization are two different things. [112]

In conclusion, conventional wisdom states that the Transdniestrian conflict resulted from internal ethnic and political problems. Additionally, Chisinau and Tiraspol have had difficulties achieving a political resolution due to their inability to find the tangency point for cooperation. This thesis does not reject this claim. The internal agreement should be the basis for the resolution. However, as stressed in the introduction of this thesis, even if an internal agreement is reached satisfying Transdniestria's leaders, the Republic of Moldova will always be dependent on the commitment to the East in the current regional order. The more Moldova tries to move west, the more the Transdniestria problem will again surface. Thus, the stability in the Republic of Moldova, with its vulnerable geographical location and limited state capacity, will depend on a cautious Moldovan foreign policy and interactions between Romania, Ukraine, and importantly Russia. Therefore, in addition to the internal agreement, an external approach should be employed to cement the peace process. The external approach should avoid past mistakes and interconnect the external players with the supervision of the OSCE and the support of the U.S. and the EU.

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[112] "George Soros Against Settling Transdniestrian Problem Through Federalization of Moldova," *INFOTAG*, MOLDOVA AZI (1998-2002) <http://Moldova%20Azi%20-%20Federalizarea.htm> (21 October 2002). (Translation by author.)

IV.   POTENTIAL EXTERNAL APPROACHES TOWARD RESOLVING THE TRANSDNIESTRIAN CONFLICT

> Traditionally, the Chinese think in terms of millennia, the Russians in terms of centuries, the Europeans in terms of generations ….[113]

> States that have close effective links with ethnic group in another state will often not remain indifferent to the fate of these groups.[114]

> The weak states, in fact, occasionally became the victims of the balance-of-power system and of the unwritten but operative dictum that if two or more major actors can agree to divide up a weaker actor, they probably will.[115]

> Interdependence affects world politics and the behavior of states; but governmental actions also influence patterns of interdependence. By creating or accepting procedures, rules, or institutions for certain kinds of activity, governments regulate and control transnational and interstate relations.[116]

In fact, while the internal part of the conflict resolution should be constructed bottom up, the international and regional environment also plays an important role, making it necessary to assess the possible external conflict resolution steps. Therefore, this chapter argues that such a top-down approach is highly desirable for the Transdniestrian conflict resolution.

This chapter will demonstrate that in the context of different conflicts, for instance Cyprus, Kashmir, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, several international relations schools of thought have been trying to explain such security dilemmas. First, this chapter shows the realist approach toward the conflict. According to the realist suggestion, the internal Moldovan conflict will eventually bring the Republic of Moldova under the major control of the Russian Federation; consequently, the other interested actors can play the opposite role, which can destabilize the region. As a result, neither the security of Moldova nor the Transdniestrian conflict will be solved in the long term. Second, this

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[113] Richard Nixon, *The Real War* (Warner Books, 1980), 312.

[114] Stephen Ryan, *Ethnic Conflict and International Relations* (Dartmouth, England: Dartmouth Publish Company, 1995), 63.

[115] Michael Handel, *Weak States in the International System* (Harvard: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1981), 176.

[116] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Harvard: Little, Brown and Company, 1977), 5.

chapter demonstrates the liberal and constructivist approaches toward the conflict. These suggest a possible solution to the Transdniestrian conflict by applying the neo-liberalist and constructivist approaches in the form of regional complex interdependence, aiming for a long-term solution. The new interdependence will eventually create new norms and principles leading to a new regional regime among the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine. Therefore, to continue the conflict will be irrelevant because the interdependence will eliminate the cyclical appearance of the conditions for such a conflict in the future.

A.   THE REALIST APPROACH AND ITS LIMITS

The first school of international relations, realism, emphasizes the centrality of power politics in the international system. The realists assume that the main actors of the international system are sovereign states. The main argument of the realists is that outside of the state – in the absence of a central authority – anarchy prevails. [117] Therefore, realists assume that the struggle for survival is the state's main preoccupation; security is achieved through power politics, military force, and economic domination, by putting other states in a dependent position. That leads states to be concerned about relative gains and losses during their interactions. Furthermore, the security dilemma is the central element of the states' interactions.[118] Thus, in such interactions, the states conduct a foreign policy of *Realpolitik* based on calculations of power and interest, which consequently tends to create balances of power or alliance arrangements among the states in the international system.[119]

Examining the regional environment around the Republic of Moldova and taking into consideration realist assumptions about international relations, the present situation dictates that the Russian Federation will remain a regional power having an asymmetrical advantage over other states, including Romania and Ukraine. That leads toward another assumption that Russia has the capability to influence the settlement of the

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[117] Kenneth N. Waltz, "Political Structures," in *Neo-realism and Its Critics,* ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 74.

[118] Heinz Gartner and Adrian Hyde-Price, "Introduction," in *Europe's New Security Challenges,* ed. Heinz Gartner et al. (Lynne Rinner Publishers: Boulder and London, 2001), 30.

[119] Kenneth N. Waltz, "Anarchic Orders and Balance of Power," in *Neo-realism and Its Critics,* ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 115-122.

Transdniestrian conflict in favor of its political and security interests and gains. For instance, the example of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina demonstrated that due to the asymmetrical disadvantage of Serbia (former Yugoslavia) and Croatia confronting the U.S. and West-European states, neither Bosnian Serbs nor Bosnian Croats could achieve their full objective and unite with correspondingly Serbia and Croatia.[120] In contrast, the Kashmir and Cyprus conflicts demonstrated that not having sufficient asymmetrical advantages, the supportive actors (India/Pakistan and Greece/Turkey) have not been able to influence the conflicts' outcomes in their favor.[121] Thus, taking into consideration the asymmetrical advantage of Russia and its interest, according to the Russian official website, in making "bilateral relations [Moldova-Russia] *strategic* in the long-term,"[122] realism predicts that the internal conflict resolution will result in advantageous gains for Russia when compared to the other interested states, Romania and Ukraine.

In a situation, when "both Russia and Ukraine have played ambivalent and sometimes counterproductive roles, serving to mediate the dispute while also competing with one another as interested parties,"[123] the realist school predicts two possible outcomes. First, in the long run, the Republic of Moldova will become asymmetrically dependent on the Russian Federation, which can lead to a domestic backlash similar to 1992. Second, to counter effectively the Russian influence in the region, Ukraine and Romania will be challenged to proceed with balance-of-power arrangements. Indeed, both outcomes are highly possible due to several reasons. First, as William Crowther stated:

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[120] For details concerning Bosnia and Herzegovina conflict, see Ivo H. Daalder, *Antony Lake and The War in Bosnia* (Georgetown University: Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, School of Foreign Service, 1995) <http://data.geortown.edu.sfs/programs/isd/>; Mario Zucconi, "The European Union in the Former Yugoslavia," in *Preventing Conflict in the Post-Communist World: Mobilizing International and Regional Organizations,* ed. Abram Chayes and Antonia Handler Chayes (The Brookings Institution, 1996).

[121] For details concerning Cyprus conflict, see Oliver P. Richmond, *Mediating in Cyprus. The Cypriot Communities and the United Nations* (Frank Cass Publishers, 1998). For details concerning the Kashmir Conflict, see Security Council, *Topic # 1: Kashmir* <http://www.coacs.org/kshmir.html> (19 March 2002).

[122] Declaration of the Russian President at the Bilateral Meeting in Moscow. "Vladimir Putin: Moldavia – Priority Partner for Russia," *State Internet-Channel "Russia"* (2001) <http://www.vesti.ru/news_print.htm.?pid=18216> (7 February 2003). (Russian) (Translation by author.)

[123] Ambassador William Hill, "Transdniestria," in *Resolving Conflicts in the Caucasus and Moldova: Perspectives on the Next Steps,* Conference Report, 6-7 May 2002 (U.S.: National Intelligence Council), 19 <http://www.odci.gov/nic/pubs/conference_reports/cr_resolving_conflict.htm> (22 November 2002).

playing on Moldova's vulnerabilities, Russian leaders employed various methods, including its control over vital raw materials and its influence on events in Transdniestria, to induce Moldova to participate more fully in CIS institutions … as Chisinau warmed toward the CIS relations between Romania and Moldova have become increasingly hostile.[124]

Second, at the NATO Prague Summit (November 2002) Romania was invited to join NATO. Meanwhile, Ukraine also declared its intention to join NATO and to maintain the GUUAM organization, which signal the objective to go westward or to balance the Russian influence in the region.[125] In short, according to the Conference Report of the US National Intelligence Council, the situation in Moldova cannot be resolved without Russia, "but conflict in Transdniestria also requires coordination with Ukraine,"[126] and maintaining sensitive Moldova-Romania relations.

In such a regional arrangement, the Republic of Moldova, forced to become a *strategic partner of Russia*, may find itself between two possible NATO members. Consequently, due to the geographical dependence on Romania and Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova will be challenged to cooperate with them and to renounce the strategic partner status with Russia. However, taking into account the situations of Transdniestria in Moldova and Crimea in Ukraine, Russia will continue to possess the ability to promote a general atmosphere of anxiety about [Russian] minorities, which may be seen as a threat to state security, according to Stephen Ryan: "a Trojan horse serving the interests of outside powers."[127] According to the realist assumptions, a similar situation exists in the Serbian-backed Republica Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As long as peacekeeping forces remain in the region, and the U.S. and the EU counter Serbia at all levels, the Republica Srpska will maintain the status quo. However, if the international/regional status quo radically changed, the seceding of the Republic Srpska

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124 William Crowther, "Moldova: Caught between Nations and Empire," in *New States New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations,* ed. Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 334.

125 "Ukraine Tries to Join NATO," *Jane's Information Group (U.K., 2001)*

<http://www.janes.com/security/international_security/news/fr/fr020703_1_n.shtml> (8 August 2002).

126 *Resolving Conflicts in the Caucasus and Moldova: Perspectives on the Next Steps,* Conference Report, 6-7 May 2002 (U.S.: National Intelligence Council), 21 <http://www.odci.gov/nic/pubs/conference_reports/cr_resolving_conflict.htm> (22 November 2002).

127 Stephen Ryan, *Ethnic Conflict and International Relations* (Dartmouth Publishing Company Limited, 1995), 60.

with Serbia's support would be likely. Likewise, in the long run, the situation in Transdniestria can be destabilized again if gains and losses among the external actors become disproportional to the states' expectations based on the balance of power.

In summary, the realism approach toward the resolution of the Transdniestrian conflict will contribute only toward short-term stability. In the long-term perspective, no matter who will influence the Republic of Moldova/Transdniestria, the situation in the region will depend on external political impact and any conflict resolution will be vulnerable to changes in the international and regional status quo order. Due to its limited state capacity and to a vulnerable geographical location, the Republic of Moldova will not have the capability to counter possible external impacts.

B. LIBERAL AND CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACHES AND THEIR LIMITS: PFP, CIS, OSCE, GUUAM, STABILITY PACT

Two schools have challenged the realist school of international relations: liberalism and constructivism, which overlap in their implications.

Some recent versions of liberalism (known as neo-liberalism) accept many realist assumptions about the anarchic nature of the international system but reject realism's conclusions. The neo-liberalists stress that international cooperation is possible under certain conditions, which can be reinforced by multilateral institutions.[128] For example, complex interdependence between states creates incentives for them to manage their economic and political relations through international organizations and significantly reduces state concentration on power politics and military force. Furthermore, the growing status of civil societies and non-state actors complements this process. Liberal institutionalism argues that because power has been transforming toward economic, political and social forms, the non-military dimension of security and cooperation among states increases.[129] Neo-liberalists argue that new interests, norms, and knowledge lead to international regime formation and change.[130]

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[128] For cooperation see, Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (A Member of the Perseus Books Group, 1984).

[129] Heinz Gartner and Adrian Hyde-Price, "Introduction," in *Europe's New Security Challenges,* ed. Heinz Gartner et al. (Lynne Rinner Publishers: Boulder and London, 2001), 31.

[130] Stephen D. Krasner, "Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regime as Intervening Variables," in *International Regimes,* ed. Stephen D. Krasner (Cornell University Press, 1983), 21.

From a different direction another international relations school, constructivism, has been moving toward some similar conclusions. That school embraces elements of post-Marxism, feminism, peace studies, and post-modernism, but does not fully reflect any of them. Constructivism rejects the ontological assumptions of both realism and liberalism. That school emphasizes the socially constructed nature of security relations, believing in the reality of a "society of states," "family of nations," and "world public opinion," and rejects the anarchical view of the international system.[131] Their view emphasizes the role of non-state actors and nonmilitary dimensions of security, and sees a possibility for moral concerns to play a role in the international environment and security issues.[132] In summary, nowadays, constructivism focuses on the socially constructed nature of international politics by indicating the growing role of democracies around the globe and consequently the growing role of domestic democratic politics. The bottom line is that states not only shape the international system but also the international system influences states/domestic politics, and international norms and state interests become mutually interdependent.

Following liberal and constructivist assumptions, the Transdniestrian conflict could have been solved based on the social character of the regional international system by appealing to humanity, involving international organizations, and creating a regional regime respected by the states. However, the fact that neither the UN nor the OSCE could have intervened in time in the Transdniestrian conflict in 1991 and 1992 demonstrates that powerful states still have the ability to avoid international organizations' pressure and pursue their own interest through different means. Second, the conflict in Cyprus revealed that a third party, the UN, can play a role in the peace process, but only under the expectation that the disputants do not think of the mediator as the finder of the solution.[133] Thus, the Transdniestrian conflict and other experiences suggest that

[131] Martin Wight, "An Anatomy of International Thought," *Review of International Studies (U.K.)* 13 (1987): 221-227.

[132] Heinz Gartner and Adrian Hyde-Price, "Introduction," in *Europe's New Security Challenges,* ed. Heinz Gartner et al. (Lynne Rinner Publishers: Boulder and London, 2001), 31.

[133] Oliver P. Richmond, *Mediating in Cyprus: The Cypriot Communities and the United Nations* (Frank Cass Publishers, 1998), 226-232.

international organizations and the social aspects of international order can contribute toward the peaceful settlement of conflicts but do not necessarily guarantee complete conflict resolution.

In the Transdniestrian conflict, the authorities of the Republic of Moldova from the beginning tried to arrange an international approach toward the conflict resolution by emphasizing the necessity of turning to the UN and the OSCE as a principle of international law. The Republic of Moldova has been trying to follow a multi-lateral foreign policy by having balanced relations with many states, including Romania, Russia, and Ukraine. Furthermore, participating in many international organizations and arrangements was considered as Moldova's objective to internationalize the conflict resolution. First, Moldova joined the CIS (except for the military part) to neutralize assumptions it held a hostile attitude toward post-Soviet republics, including Russia. Second, in 1994, Moldova joined the "Partnership for Peace" initiative of NATO to demonstrate a cooperative attitude toward promoting stability in Europe. Next, in 1997 Moldova joined the GUUAM arrangement expecting to profit economically from regional cooperation and hoping to gain support from Transdniestrian authorities. Next, Moldova joined the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe (2001) trying to achieve interdependent integration in that region and prospective integration into EU structures.[134] Additionally, Moldovan and Transdniestrian NGOs have established a level of cooperation in social and cultural spheres: for example, Transdniestrian sportsmen regularly participate in the Republic of Moldova teams at international competitions; cultural activities have been conducted in friendly atmospheres; population and business elites from Transdniestria have been always having free access to entire Moldovan territory and markets. Importantly, by admitting the OSCE as a central mediator, the situation should have improved considerable. However, the conflict development and negotiations have demonstrated the fact (just as Cyprus depends on relations between Turkey and Greece) that in the current regional order the conflict resolution still largely depends on the policies of Russia and Ukraine, and potential sensitivity of Romania.

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[134] Ungureanu Oleg, "Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe – A Means of Integrating the Republic of Moldova into Europe," in *Highway or Barrier? The Republic of Moldova's Integration into Euro-Atlantic Structures*, eds. Igor Munteanu and Trevor Waters (Conflicts Studies Research Studies: Document Index: Central and Eastern Europe; the Balkans, July 2001) <http://www.csrc.ac.uk/frames/frames_page.htm> (10 October 2001).

In summary, liberalists and constructivists, contrary to realists, expect a growing role for international organizations and non-state actors, and evolutionary change in the international environment around the Republic of Moldova. However, the conflict resolution concerning Transdniestria has demonstrated that mediators should also not exclude realist assumptions about the interest and power of external states, which can influence the internal situation in the Republic of Moldova. Furthermore, in the short run, the external actors will be obviously more effective than in the long run. Therefore, the authorities of the Republic of Moldova and mediators seeking an internal solution should also concentrate on the external approach to secure the peace settlement.

C.   USING COMPLEX INTERDEPENDENCE TO SOLVE THE CONFLICT

The basis for the Transdniestrian conflict solution should be a negotiated internal agreement under international auspices, which ought to reflect a compromise between the disputants. Meanwhile, achieving this, mediators should also concentrate on eliminating the causes of the conflict and diminishing the asymmetry in the influence of external actors in the Republic of Moldova. That will remove the possibility of cyclical (or dialectical) appearance of the conditions for such a conflict in the future. To solve the Transdniestrian conflict in the Republic of Moldova in the long run, this thesis suggests creating regional complex interdependence around the Republic of Moldova. That resolution basically suggests interconnecting the countries interested in this geo-political region: Romania, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine. This proposal presumes external and domestic approaches, which will involve multiple actors cooperating through multiple channels.

In fact, multiple channels of communication, multiple issues on interstate agendas, and unwillingness of governments to use military force toward other governments characterize complex interdependence.[135] Thus, the Republic of Moldova with international support should establish *transgovernmental* relations with Romania, Russia, and Ukraine. Transgovernmental relations presume to be the unofficial foreign policy conducted between government departments of one state and those of another.[136]

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[135] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Harvard: Little, Brown and Company, 1977), 25.

[136] Graham Evans and Jeffrey Newnham, *The Penguin Dictionary of International Relations,* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 541.

In practice, working relations among the governmental officials below the top levels should be established in the long rung. Additionally, the interstate agendas for action should include multiple issues other than security and politics. An economic agenda of cooperation is especially desirable. Also, the agenda must include cooperative military aspects such as joint operations. Specifically, the proposed regional complex interdependence presumes the creation of elements such as a quadripartite economical free trade zone, and combined quadripartite military cooperation in humanitarian, anti-terrorist, illegal immigration and smuggling, and peacekeeping missions. The main factors, which would interest all participants, would be a common regional stability and the connection of Russia and Southeastern Europe's markets. Importantly, all these interconnections should equally represent Moldova, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine. Any asymmetrical representations during the initial stage of cooperation will imbalance the proposed complex interdependence causing unilateral dependence leading to countermeasures by other actors.

Complex interdependence theory also draws a distinction between dependence and interdependence. The former implies a state of being determined or significantly affected by external forces. The latter one implies situations characterized by reciprocal effects among countries having joint gains and losses.[137] Thus, the Republic of Moldova with international support should carefully conduct foreign policy and economic cooperation, eliminating existing vulnerabilities in raw material and energy resources. The financial investment of Russia, Romania, and Ukraine in Moldova should be symmetrically proportional to prevent Moldova's dependence, especially the Transdniestrian region, on any one external state. In particular, Romanian and Western investments are highly desirable in Transdniestria. Thus, creating complex interdependence around the Republic of Moldova will contribute to internal conflict resolution in the long run by strengthening the internal agreement and reducing the state's vulnerabilities.

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[137] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Harvard: Little, Brown and Company, 1977), 8-11.

Western Europe provides a possible model for the creation of complex interdependence. Jean Monnet (one of the creators of the EC architecture) noted with respect to Western Europe:

> There will be no peace in Europe if states reestablish themselves on the basis of national sovereignty, with all that this implies by way of prestige policies and economic protectionism. If countries once more protect themselves against each other, it will once more be necessary to build up vast armies ....[138]

Reflecting on the success of Monnet's vision, Alexander Wendt observes:

> A strong liberal or constructivist analysis of this problem would suggest that four decades of cooperation may have transformed a positive interdependence of outcomes into collective European identity in terms of which states increasingly define their 'self-interest.' Even if egoistic reasons were its starting points, the process of cooperating tends to redefine those reasons by reconstituting identities and interests in terms of new inter-subjective understandings and commitments.[139]

Thus, the West-European pursuit of interconnections beyond the intergovernmental contributed to the creation of complex interdependence. In the case of the Cyprus dispute, direct conflict between Turkey and Greece is not likely to occur due to the involvement of these states in West-European complex interdependence, where non-cooperation can cost more than cooperation. In contrast, the absence of complex interdependence between India and Pakistan does not exclude continuing bilateral confrontation over the Kashmir region because there are few benefits from cooperation that could be lost. Consequently, complex interdependence affected European politics and state behaviors, and governmental actions in turn influenced patterns of European interdependence.

The weakest point of the proposal about complex interdependence around the Republic of Moldova is the absence of collective defense commitments in the region, which theoretically leaves the possibility of military rivalry. Even in November 1932, the British professor Ramsay Muir claimed an interdependent world was emerging due to four factors: conquest of distance, creation of a single world political system, cultural

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[138] Michael Mihalka, "Cooperative Security: From Theory to Practice," in *Cooperative Security: New Horizons for International Order,* ed. Richard Cohen and Michael Mihalka (European Center for Security Studies George C. Marshall, Paper, no 3: 2001), 47.

[139] Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It," *International Organizations* (Spring 1992): 417.

assimilation, and economic interdependence.[140] However, to achieve a fully interdependent world, Ramsay Muir also urgently suggested the limitation of state sovereignty, abolition of war, and *promotion of economic cooperation*. Nevertheless, the Second World War became further proof of the inability of the interdependent economies to produce lasting cooperation without strong security arrangements.

Responding to that claim, this thesis assumes that military confrontations between Russia and Ukraine, despite their friction, are not likely to occur because both their economies and social spheres are highly interdependent.[141] Meanwhile, Romania will not be militarily threatened either by Russia or Ukraine because of the high probability of NATO membership in 2004. Furthermore, according to William Crowther, "on purely diplomatic ground, Romania has little or nothing to gain from instability on its eastern border."[142] Additionally, Romania has been trying to join the EU, another element of European interdependence. Thus, in the near future, due to evolving Russia-U.S. (September 11 impact) and NATO-Russia (new NATO-Russia Council)[143] cooperation and the shifting center of strategic instability from Europe to the Middle East and Far East, the region around the Republic of Moldova will not experience geo-strategic tensions to provoke military inter-state confrontations. Furthermore, if one strategically assesses Russian threats and security risks, the center of gravity is shifting toward other regions: the Caucasus (Chechnya, tension with Georgia, Armenia-Azerbaijan dispute), Central Asia (Tajikistan), the Caspian Sea dispute, and the Far East where there is a potential conflict with China arising from long-term demographic trends.[144] In summary,

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[140] Ramsay Muir, *The Interdependent World and Its Problems* (Kennikat Press, 1971, first published in 1933).

[141] See three possible scenarios about the Ukraine development, proposed by Samuel Huntington in 1996. Obviously, the 3-d scenario about remaining united by cooperating economically closely with Russia is prevailing. Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilization: Remaking of World Order* (Touchstone Book, 1997), 167-168.

[142] William Crowther, "Moldova: Caught between Nations and Empire," in *New States New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations,* ed. Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 335.

[143] "NATO-Russia Relations: A New Quality," *Declaration by Heads of State and Government of NATO Member States and the Russian Federation at the Rome Summit – May 28, 2002* <http://www.nato.int/docu/basictxt/b020528e.htm> (8 October 2002).

[144] See the Russian threat assessment by Gerhard Mangott, "Farewell to Russia: The Decay of a Superpower," and Daniel N. Nelson, "Great Powers and Global Insecurity," in *Europe's New Security Challenges,* ed. Heinz Gartner et al. (Lynne Rinner Publishers: Boulder and London, 2001), 353-406.

due to evolving world and regional security situations, the region around the Republic of Moldova will likely not have military interstate confrontations in the near future; therefore, the evolving complex interdependence will have time to establish strong links at all levels, which will potentially change the regional regime and constructively eliminate the preconditions for the Transdniestrian conflict in the future.

In summary, regional complex interdependence would be applicable to the Republic of Moldova presuming deeper interconnection with Romania, Russia, and Ukraine along with the U.S. and the EU's support under the OSCE umbrella. The necessity of the US and the EU monitoring is due to several factors. First, these actors will ensure that Russian forces withdraw from Transdniestria according to the OSCE and Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE) obligations. Second, they will balance the Russian power in the region by allowing the evolution of the complex interdependence to start working in the long term. Subsequently, that will lead toward establishing indeed complex interdependent interactions in proposed regional free trade zone and cooperative effort to combat the common regional instability and threats. Such interconnected interactions in the long run will create a common interest not only between Chisinau and Tiraspol but also among the external actors interested in that geo-political region. Additionally, complex interdependence will create the new identity within Republic of Moldova; therefore, either Tiraspol or Chisinau will no longer perceive a conflict of interests based on different identities. Importantly, new growing generations will change their attitude toward the conflict and region only in transparent cooperation. The argument of the proposed transformation is that new norms and principles of the new complex interdependent regime will in the long run neutralize the Transdniestrian conflict.

V.   CONCLUSION

A.   REVIEW

This thesis has analyzed the possibility of creating regional complex interdependence around the Republic of Moldova for the purpose of solving the Transdniestrian conflict in the long run.

The Transdniestrian conflict, which erupted in the Republic of Moldova after the break up of the Soviet Union, represents not only an internal or ethnic conflict, but also a conflict with extensive external historical influences. This conflict thus differs from the conventional wisdom that emphasizes the internal causes of ethnic conflict. First, the Russian Empire, lately the Soviet Union (USSR), and Romania have had external impacts on Moldova's nation-state formation process. Those impacts have created the conditions for the future potential internal conflict in Transdniestria. The demise of the Soviet Union was also the catalyst for the conflict eruption. Second, due to its isolated geographical location and limited state capacity to counter external influences, the Republic of Moldova has been historically dependent on external states. One of them, Russia, is asymmetrically powerful compared to others in that geo-political region. Therefore, even if an internal agreement between the authorities of Moldova and Transdniestria is signed, it will be always vulnerable to the influence of Russia. Therefore, an external conflict resolution approach is also necessary to solve the conflict in the long run. One of them, regional complex interdependence around the Republic of Moldova, can solve the Transdniestrian conflict, providing the internal agreement is signed, by eliminating the grounds for reappearance of the conditions for the conflict in the future.

The Republic of Moldova, previously known as the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR), has been a historical product of Bessarabia and a small part of the former Russian Empire's territory from the left bank of the Dniestr River. The historical Bessarabia had been disputed territory between the Russian Empire, later the Soviet Union and now Russia, and the Kingdom of Romania, now Romania. In fact, Romania became a historical fact due to ethnic nation-state creation embracing "all Romanians" by the unification of Wallachia and Moldova in the nineteenth century. Therefore, at that

time, the authorities of Romania appealed to all Romanians abroad, including Bessarabia, to unify with Romania. Meanwhile, due to strategic considerations, the Russian authorities would never consider any possibilities of losing that territory and would apply all means to incorporate and to keep that region in the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union. The territory on the right bank of the Dniestr River (future Transdniestria) would be used to check and balance any integrationist moves of Bessarabia and Romania. In short, specifically to Eastern Europe, the Republic of Moldova (former Bessarabia) during the initial nation-formation became a zone of struggle between the new ethnic state of all Romanians, Romania, and Russia (the Soviet Union). The territory of the right bank of the Dniestr River (future Transdniestria) was constantly used as a psychological check factor.

During that confrontation, Bessarabia became a territory shifting back and forth between Romania and the Soviet Union. Correspondingly, to control this territory, these states applied harsh policies, which created a polarized mood in the Moldovan society. Initially, after the Russian Empire's collapse in 1918, Bessarabia united with Romania. However, for Russia losing Bessarabia was seen as a defeat and a strategic territorial loss. Therefore, taking advantage of the large Moldovan population on the other part of the Dniestr River, Moscow created the artificial Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR - future Transdniestria) in 1924 to facilitate the penetration of the Soviet propaganda into the Kingdom of Romania and to press its territorial claim for Bessarabia. The 1939 Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact led to the incorporating of Bessarabia into the Soviet Union. However, the Second World War and the Romanian alliance with Nazi Germany radically impacted Bessarabia and especially Transdniestria, which became the worst case of the Romanian Holocaust. As a result of such events, three factors would become crucial in the development of the future Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR). First, the Moldovans/Romanians of Bessarabia would be considered unreliable citizens of the Soviet Union (allies of Fascist Romania). Second, the Transdniestrians would in contrast play the key roles in the life of the MSSR. Third, the Soviet Union policy would result in significant purges of Moldovans and Romanians. Eventually, efforts by the Transdniestrian elite to mobilize the population during the 1992 conflict used the factor of historical memory extensively.

The Soviet period in the MSSR reflected the old-fashioned Russian goal of dominance over the occupied territory with one exception: the policy was amplified by Communist ideology and directed toward Soviet nation building, full secularization, repression, and *Russification*. However, the Romanian authority never lost sight of Bessarabia at that time and did everything possible to sustain the Romanian spirit among the Moldovans. As a result, by 1970 the new Moldovans began nationally to awake and to claim more openly beliefs about their truly Romanian identity. That was accompanied by the growing local antagonism toward Moscow. Thus, the antagonism between Moscow and Bucharest over the Bessarabian question never disappeared during the twentieth century. As a result, the artificial nation building in the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic would produce tensions between two historic sub-regions, Bessarabia and Transdniestria. The Transdniestrian conflict, despite its internal aspects, would be again employed by external forces to attain their political objectives. The obvious internal tool for such an external policy was the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR), revived as the Transdniestrian Moldavian Republic since 1991, which has always had an elite that is loyal to Moscow (the majority being Russians and Ukrainians). The conflict itself was also accompanied by traditional geo-political tensions between Moscow and Bucharest concerning rights on historical territories.

The MASSR, a purposely created and artificially "Moldovan" autonomous republic with a Ukrainian majority (50 percent), served as a foreign policy tool of the Soviet Union from 1924 to 1939. It facilitated the penetration of the Soviet propaganda into the kingdom of Romania and ensured that Bessarabia remained a topical issue in international politics. Nowadays, the current Transdniestrian elite has been trying to repeat these techniques since 1990. Additionally, by the end of 1990s, the Republic of Moldova's local elite for the first time became dominant over the former *privileged* Transdniestrian elite. Both elites became aware of the differences within Moldova in national awareness and with growing antagonisms associated with differences in identity, and they consequently employed them as a weapon to attain their political objectives, which resulted in the military conflict. Even in this situation, the Russian and Romanian authorities were also carefully monitoring the situation trying to influence the internal conflict in their favor.

The catalyst for the conflict was again an external factor, the collapse of the Soviet Union, which resulted in a temporary regional power vacuum and democratization of Moldovan life accompanied by the national awakening. Meanwhile, the gravest concern of Moscow and Transdniestria was the possibility that historical Bessarabia would reunite with Romania. However, the subsequent conflict reflected a miscalculation by Moscow and the Transdniestrian elite about the new Moldovan elite and population's dedication toward their new motherland, the Republic of Moldova, rather than Romania, which became friendly, but not their political homeland. Nevertheless, from the Russian point of view, the de facto Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic precluded the unification of the Republic of Moldova (Bessarabia) with Romania. In short, the conflict proved also to be amplified by historical tensions between the Soviet Union (later on Russia) and Romania regarding the Bessarabian dispute.

Due to strong direct and indirect Soviet (Russian) support to Tiraspol, the military actions by themselves proved to be more advantageous for the Transdniestrian side, which succeeded in persuading neighboring Ukraine and Russia to intervene for the *defending of all Slavs*. The cease-fire situation left ripe the possibility for future political battles, and the accidental triggering of future conflicts. In short, this thesis demonstrated that the internal conflict with its military actions proved also to be about relations between the Soviet Union (later on Russia) and Romania, which were historically antagonistic. Therefore, this thesis argued that as long as the Russia-Romania-Ukraine triangle is not interconnected in complex interdependence, the internal conflict resolution will always be vulnerable.

The conflict resolution has demonstrated several factors. First, asymmetrically powerful Russia indeed controlled the Transdniestrian political elite. Second, to repeat history by creating for a second time the MASSR in the form of the Dniestr Moldovan Republic has been impossible because of the different situation: the Republic of Moldova did not have a strong intention of joining Romania. Moreover, Ukraine had a Russian-speaking population in Crimea and worried about a similar development inside Ukraine; therefore, they revised their policy not to support secession. Third, not only Russia's but also the other external actors' interests collided in that region, which had not been there before. Independent Ukraine became a strong factor, Romania has been a traditional

factor in the Republic of Moldova (Bessarabia), and the United States of America became one of the dominant factors in Europe as well as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Therefore, even though the political conflict resolution seems to be an attempt to solve an ordinary internal conflict between two belligerent parts, external actors have played an important role in the peace process. Thus, analyzing the conflict resolution, this thesis agrees that internal agreement should be a basis for the solution. However, any internal solution will be always fragile because of the external states' differing views regarding the Republic of Moldova. Even if an internal agreement is reached, the Republic of Moldova will be always dependent on demonstrating its commitment to the East in the current regional order. The more Moldova attempts to *move* west, the more the Transdniestrian problem will surface. Thus, stability in the Republic of Moldova, with its vulnerable geographical location and limited state capacity, will depend on cautious Moldovan foreign policy and interactions between Romania, Ukraine, and an asymmetrically powerful Russian Federation. Therefore, this thesis argues that to strengthen the internal (bottom-up approach) agreement in the long run, the external approach (top-down) under international supervision resolving the Transdniestrian conflict is essential. The external agreement should not duplicate past mistakes and should interconnect the external players with the support of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the United States of America, and the European Union.

Evaluating the external approaches derived from international relations theory, this thesis argued that the realism approach toward resolving the Transdniestrian conflict would contribute only toward short-term results. In the long-term perspective, no matter who influences the Republic of Moldova/Transdniestria, the situation will be vulnerable to external political impacts and changes of the status quo in the international/regional order. Due to its small size and vulnerable location, the Republic of Moldova will not have the capability to counter possible external influence. Thus, in the long run, the situation in Transdniestria can be easily destabilized again if gains and losses of the external actors become disproportional to their expectations.

In contrast to realists, liberalist and constructivist scholars emphasize the growing role of international organizations and non-state actors, and the socially constructed

nature of the international environment. From their perspective, new actors could influence the internal conflict of the Republic of Moldova, leading it toward peaceful resolution. However, the conflict resolution concerning Transdniestria has demonstrated that mediators should also not exclude the realist assumptions, as noted in Chapter IV, about the interest and power of external states, which have the ability to influence the internal situation in the Republic of Moldova. Furthermore, in the short run, these external actors will be the most effective actors. In conclusion, the authorities of the Republic of Moldova and outside mediators in addition to seeking an internal solution should also concentrate on an external approach to increase interconnections among the actors to secure the settlement in the long run.

B.   RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to a negotiated internal agreement under international auspices, the international actors should also concentrate on eliminating the pre-conditions for conflict and diminishing the asymmetric external influences in the Republic of Moldova. That will eliminate the possibility that the conflict will become cyclical. Thus, eventually to solve the Transdniestrian conflict in the Republic of Moldova, this thesis recommends creating regional complex interdependence around the Republic of Moldova. That resolution basically suggests interconnecting the countries interested in this geo-political region: Romania, Russian Federation, and Ukraine. This proposal presumes linking external and internal approaches by involving multiple actors in multiple channels of cooperation. Creating a regional free trade zone presents an important element for starting interdependence, which would interest all states in connecting the Russian market with Europe's Southeastern markets. Combating common threats and maintaining regional stability would also contribute to the common interest to facilitate economic cooperation.

By proposing regional complex interdependence around the Republic of Moldova, this thesis recommends the Republic of Moldova establish *transgovernmental* relations with Romania, Russia, and Ukraine. Additionally, these states' agendas with each other should include multiple issues besides security and politics. As discussed in Chapter IV, importantly, all these interconnections should represent Moldova, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine equally. Additionally, the Republic of Moldova with international support should

carefully conduct foreign and economic policies aimed at eliminating existing vulnerabilities in raw material and energy resources. Furthermore, the financial investments of Russia, Romania, and Ukraine in Moldova should be symmetrically proportional to exclude the dependence of Moldova, especially the Transdniestrian region, on any one of the external states. Thus, creating complex interdependence around the Republic of Moldova will contribute to the internal conflict resolution by reducing the existing state's vulnerabilities to manipulation by external actors.

This thesis assumes that due to evolving world and regional security situations, the region around the Republic of Moldova will not likely have military inter-state confrontations in the near future. Therefore, the evolving complex interdependence will have time to establish strong links at all levels, which will potentially change the regional regime and constructively eliminate the precondition for a Transdniestrian conflict in the future. First, military confrontations between Russia and Ukraine are not likely. Meanwhile, Romania will not be militarily threatened by Russia or Ukraine. Next, due to evolving Russia-US and NATO-Russia cooperation and the shifting focus of strategic instability from Europe to the Middle East and Far East, the region around the Republic of Moldova will not experience geo-strategic tensions sufficient to provoke military inter-state confrontations.

In conclusion, this thesis recommends that the United States of America and the European Union support the internal conflict resolution and the creating of regional complex interdependence around the Republic of Moldova under the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe umbrella. These actors will balance the asymmetrical power of Russia in the region in the short-term, thereby allowing the complex interdependence to evolve in the long-term. The final argument of the proposed transformation is that the new norms and principles of the complexly political and economical interdependent regime will in time eliminate the conditions for the reemergence of the Transdniestrian conflict. Overall, such a situation will contribute to stability in Southeastern Europe.

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APPENDIX I. HISTORICAL TIMELINE[145]

1526	Bessarabia (Moldova) exists as part of the Ottoman Empire
1791	Eastern Moldavia is annexed by Russia
28 May 1812	Bessarabia is annexed by Russia
15 December 1917	The Moldavian Democratic Republic is proclaimed by the Council of State (Sfatul Tarii)
18 January – February 1918	Ukrainian (Ukrainian People's Republic) intervention in Bessarabia
19 January – March 1918	Romanian intervention in Bessarabia
6 February 1918	Council of State proclaimed independence from Russia – the Moldovan Democratic Republic is formed
9 April 1918	Council of State accepted the Romanian protectorate
10 December 1918	Incorporation into Romania completed
10 October 1924	Moldavian ASSR established (future Transdniestria) in the Ukrainian SSR by the Soviet Union
28 June 1940	Bessarabia incorporated into the Soviet Union (from August 2, 1940, renamed – Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic)
25 July – 22 August 1944	Reincorporation into Romania

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[145] Mari Coliece Poe Pepper, "Returning to the Past?: The Political Implications of Communist Electoral Victory in Post-Soviet Moldova," Thesis (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, 2001), 57.

15 September 1947	Reincorporation into the Soviet Union (de facto 1944)
23 June 1990	The Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova (sovereign)
23 May 1991	Republic of Moldova (name changed)
27 August 1991	Moldovan Independence declared
1 December 1991	Transdniestria declared independence from Moldova (not recognized)
25 December 1991	Independence effective (upon dissolution of the USSR)
December 1991 – June 1992	Transdniestrian military conflict
7 March 1994	Referendum rejects union with Romania

APPENDIX II. ABBREVIATIONS

CIS – Commonwealth of Independent States

CFE – Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty

EU – European Union

GUUAM – Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova Cooperative Initiative

MASSR – Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic

MSSR – Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

UN – United Nations Organization

US – United States of America

USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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